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ABSTRACT

A case study approach was used to explore the sources of negative attitudes toward writing of three unskilled college freshman writers. The studies included interviews both with the students concerning their writing histories and with their former high school English teachers. In addition, information was gathered about their verbal abilities and their high school grades. The data were examined for patterns that would explain the cumulative development of the students' negative attitudes toward writing, at least through high school and the beginning of college. Analysis of the data indicated that the three students held many misconceptions about the nature of writing that contributed to their negative attitudes and appeared to hinder the development of their writing abilities. For these students, writing appeared to be outer- rather than inner-directed--they wrote primarily to please the teacher and earn a grade rather than to please themselves and to learn. Overall, the findings suggested that the students' atttudes toward writing were shaped by their teachers' attitudes. (Appendixes contain a copy of the writing sample placement test used at the students' college, excerpts from student and teacher interviews, and excerpts of comments on student work made by consultants.) (Author/FL)

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United States Department of Education
National Institute of Education
Washington, D.C.

HOW ATTITUDE INTERFERES WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF UNSKILLED COLLEGE FRESHMAN WRITERS

By

Pamela Gay, Principal Investigator

Final Report
Under Contract NIE-G-81-0102

Submitted to
Dr. Candace Miyamura, Ph.D.
Grants Project Officer

June 1983

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Submitted by the
Old Dominion University Research Foundation
P.O. Box 6369
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June 1983

ABSTRACT

I. Statement of the Problem

Attitude plays a role not only at the beginning of the writing process but throughout: writers are guided by their beliefs about writing and about themselves as writers. Some beliefs about writing may be useful, contributing to a more positive attitude, while others may interfere, contributing to a more negative attitude. Misconceptions about writing can hinder developing writers.

II. Methodology

To explore the sources of negative attitudes toward writing of three unskilled college freshman writers at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, a case study approach was used. The studies include interviews with the students concerning their writing histories, interviews with their former high school English teachers, and information on their verbal abilities and high school grades. The data ws examined for patterns that would help explain the cumulative development of these three writers' negative attitudes, at least through high school and the beginning of college. Generalizations drawn from one case are compared to those drawn from other cases in an attempt to derive theoretical implications.

III. Results

The three student writers in this sample held numerous misconceptions about the nature of writing which contributed to negative attitudes toward writing and appeared to hinder the development of their writing abilities. For these three writers, writing appeared outer- rather than innner-directed: these students wrote primarily to please the teacher and earn a grade rather than to please themselves and to learn. This study revealed that these students' attitudes toward writing were shaped, to a great extent, by their teachers' attitudes.

ABSTRACT (concluded)

IV. Conclusions

Teachers not only need to recognize the role of attitude in the development of writing abilities but also to understand how attitudes toward writing are formed -- specifically, the role beliefs play in the complex process of attitude formation. Above all, teachers need to be aware of the powerful role they play in shaping students' attitudes toward writing. Teachers cannot intervene effectively if their teaching is guided (or misguided) by an oversimplified model of composing and by misconceptions about the act of writing.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who writes, any writer--whether skilled or unskilled, practiced or unpracticed--sometimes has a negative attitude toward writing, particularly when confronting a new writing task. Writing is, after all, hard work. In fact, some writing anxiety--one common manifestation of a negative attitude toward writing--may even be necessary for producing an effective piece of writing, although the optimal level of anxiety may vary from individual to individual and task to task. Student writers, like all learners, have attitudes toward writing which have developed over many years of schooling. This study argues that writing teachers not only need to recognize the role of attitude in the development of writing abilities but also to understand how attitudes toward writing are formed--specifically, the role beliefs play in the complex process of attitude formation. They need to understand how misconceptions about the act of writing can hinder developing writers. Above all, teachers need to be aware of the powerful role they play in shaping students' attitudes toward writing.

Productive and effective writers are able to withstand the dissonance and negative feelings they experience during writing because, as previously successful writers, they have developed sufficiently positive attitudes toward the whole act of writing. In 1851, when Flaubert was beginning his five years of work on Madame Bovary, he wrote to his mistress Louise Colet:

> What a heavy oar the pen is, and what a strong current ideas are to row in...Sometimes, when I am empty, when words don't come, when I find I haven't written a single sentence after scribbling whole pages, I collapse on my couch and lie there dazed, bogged in a swamp of despair...If you only knew how I was torturing myself, you'd be sorry for me. (Rosen, 1981, p. 32.)

Flaubert's negative feelings toward writing, judging by the publication and success of Madame Bovary, did not interfere, finally, with his writing performance. Indeed, it is probable that his extreme writing anxiety was necessary to produce Madame Bovary. However, students who have not succeeded as writers are often stymied by the frustration and discomfort they experience during the act of writing: their negative attitudes interfere with their development as writers.

While attitude is generally understood to mean the degree of positive or negative evaluation of an object or concept, the role that beliefs play in the attitude formation process is generally not understood. Yet, understanding the relationship of the cognitive and affective dimensions of attitude is crucial to understanding how a negative attitude toward writing can interfere with the development of writing abilities.

Beliefs are based on the information we have about ourselves and our environment. Many beliefs are formed on the basis of direct experience (descriptive beliefs) or are indirectly inferred (inferential beliefs). Still other beliefs involve one's accepting the conclusions of authorities, such as newspapers, books, television and teachers (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Beliefs--which may be viewed as hypotheses are what psychologist George Kelly (1963) calls "personal constructs"--represent our understanding of the world and enable us to make meaning out of the chaotic "stream of events" that we live through. According to Kelly, we are constantly adjusting what we believe to be true: we look at our world and then attempt to "fit over the realities of which the world is composed" (p. 8). Belief (and attitude) formation is a "nonverbalized process" (Fishbein, 1967a). We do not, in other words, consciously walk about like scientists, continually testing hypotheses. As we learn, however, we adjust our beliefs in a continual attempt to approach "truth."

A single belief is not a reliable indicator of attitude. Attitude is determined by salient beliefs--those which we hold most intensely. We might consider each salient belief as weighted according to strength. The stronger the belief, the higher it appears in the hierarchy of beliefs. The sum of these weighted beliefs finally tips a person's attitude in one direction or another.

Although beliefs appear static, they potentially may be revised or reconstructed on the basis of disconfirming evidence from outside sources. When a contradiction is perceived, dissonance is created and the original belief is reconsidered for a time, perhaps until another belief is "proven" true. A belief which has been intensely held over time, however, is more difficult to revise. Even if an intensely held belief is revised, attitude will not necessarily change, since attitude is determined by more than one salient belief.

Attitude not only plays a role at the beginning of the writing process but also throughout; writers are guided by their beliefs about writing and about themselves as writers. Some beliefs about writing may be useful, contributing to a more positive attitude, while other beliefs may interfere, contributing to a more negative attitude.

The relationship of attitude and writing has been recognized in case studies of the composing processes of skilled and unskilled writers (Emig, 1971; Stallard, 1972; Stiles, 1976; Pianko, 1977; Perl, 1978) and anxious and non-anxious writers (Bloom, 1980 a, b, in press; Rose, 1980). Various correlation studies have been conducted (Daly and Miller, 1975 b, c; Daly and Shamo, 1976, 1978; Daly, 1977; 1978). The effects of writing apprehension have also been studied (Book, 1976; Bova, 1979), as well as the effects of various intervention strategies, such as peer evaluation (Pfeifer, 1981), on writing apprehension. In a descriptive study, Bell (1982) compared the attitudes toward writing of basic writing and upper-division college students. Stiles (1976) generally explored some possible sources of student attitude toward writing, Powers (1979) explored one possible source of writing apprehension among basic writing students--compulsory writing. Several researchers (Daly, 1979; Harris, 1979; Rose, 1980) have implied or hypothesized that prior negative experience with writing is generally the source of the development of negative attitudes toward writing. Rose (1980) comes closest to in-depth exploration of attitude formation but he focuses only on writer's block, an extreme manifestation of negative attitude toward writing. Possible sources of negative attitude toward writing have yet to be extensively studied.

To explore the sources of negative attitudes toward writing of three unskilled college freshman writers, I used a case study approach. The studies correlate interviews with the students, interviews with their former high school English teachers, and information on their verbal abilities and high school grades. I attempted to find patterns in this data that would help explain the cumulative development of their negative attitudes, at least through high school and the beginning of college.

Even though many more cases are needed before a formal theory of the development of attitude toward writing can be postulated, this study provides a basis for the development of hypotheses and the beginning of a theory. Most important, this study marks the beginning of an exploration into a new area--the application of attitude theory to the teaching of writing and the study of the development of writing abilities--an area new not only to composition and pedagogy but to psychology as well. The results of this research may help teachers gain a new perspective on student writers, possibly bringing about changes in teaching strategies and practices.

Chapter 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Student Attitude Toward Writing--Research Studies

In the early 1970's, the teaching of writing began to shift from a product-oriented to a process-oriented approach. A number of case studies of the composing process of pre-college student writers began to appear. Researchers, examining the writing process rather than the product, began to observe writing behavior as well, including attitude toward writing.

Emig (1971) was the first to observe the behavior of writers while they were in the process of writing. Emig found that because rigid rules prescribed by teachers for "school-sponsored" writing often differ greatly from students' own experiences with writing, students, though they may outwardly confirm, often feel inwardly cynical and hostile. Fear of the teacher's criticism, Emig also found, often prevented students from showing their real feelings.

While Emig made no distinction between students' writing abilities, Stallard (1972) sought to identify writing behavior, including attitude toward writing, peculiar to good student writers in the twelfth grade. Stallard found that 40% of the good writers said they wrote for pleasure compared to 14% of a group chosen at random. However, no evidence was revealed to show that a positive attitude influences the particular writing behavior examined in this study. The study did reveal a major characteristic of a good writer--a willingness to put forth effort to make communication clearer to the reader.

Graves (1973), investigating the writing processes of seven-year-old children, studied attitude toward writing as one of several variables. Graves asked children to rank their writings, to provide a rationale for the choice of the best paper and to express their idea of "the good writer." Graves found sex differences in the responses and reported other findings, such as unassigned writing was longer than assigned writing, but did not explicitly discuss the role of attitude in writing.

Numerous investigators, using a single case for study and Emig's definition of the composing processs as a guide, examined student writing behavior at various grade levels (e.g., grade twelve-Mischel, 1974; grades seven, ten and college-Metzger, 1972). Attitude toward writing was revealed to some extent by students in the process of composing; however, since attitude was not the focus of the research, it was not discussed in depth.

In the mid-1970's, studies of the composing process began to include college writers. Student attitude toward writing also became more of a consideration; researchers began speculating about the attitudinal development of college freshman writers. At this time too, researchers began to compare the writing behaviors of skilled and unskilled writers.

Metzger (1976), after studying the composing processes of three students--seventh grade, tenth grade and college level, observed that these students viewed writing as a joyless chore because they perceived their teachers only as editors and proofreaders. Metzger suggests teachers become listeners as well as coaches who provide students with opportunities for pleasurable writing experiences.

Stiles (1976) analyzed the composing processes and attitudes toward writing of unskilled college writers. She found that college English instructors and family members appeared to have played a far greater role in shaping these students' attitudes toward writing than peers. Writing "disability," Stiles concludes, may be attributed to a myriad of causes which extend backward, perhaps even predating formal schooling. While Stiles explores some of the sources of student attitude toward writing, her study is limited: (1) to unskilled ("remedial") writers in selected two-year colleges in East Tennessee and (2) by her broad definition of attitude, reflected in her conclusion that these student writers maintained positive attitudes toward writing, meaning that they believed that the ability to write well would be of great personal benefit to them in later life.

Pianko (1977) observed seventeen college freshman writers (10 unskilled and 7 "traditional") in the act of composing an essay and questioned them regarding their writing behavior and their attitudes and feelings during the

process of composing. In addition, each student was interviewed in depth concerning prior writing experiences. Pianko's study revealed the act of reflection as a critical component of the composing process of successful writers and the importance of attitude toward writing in connection with this act. Pianko observed that unskilled writers had more positive feelings about their products and speculated that the reason for this attitude was that they were not aware of the deficiencies in their text. Pianko (1979) also observed that "a depth of insight" was "behaviorally and attitudinally absent from less successful writers" (p. 277). Again Pianko speculates: "Since traditional student writers in this study did more writing in school, saw more non-school writing being done by family and peers, and did more self-initiated writing, they developed a commitment to, and understanding about writing which was evidenced by the reflecting they did while they were composing" (p. 277). Pianko found that unskilled writers, on the other hand, did exclusively school writing and did not see family and peers engaged in writing: they did not perceive writing as playing a specific role in their lives.

Shaughnessy (1977), in a cross-sectional survey of college freshman writing, categorized and explained the sources of writing problems of basic writing (BW) students in an effort to understand the logic that underlies their writing behaviors. Shaughnessy found that for fear of error many basic writers block or, after repeated attempts to begin, produce a sentence that is "hopelessly entangled" (p. 7). Shaughnessy closes Errors and Expectations, the book in which she reports the findings of her study, by emphasizing the role of teacher attitude in writing improvement and the importance of a process-oriented rather than a product-oriented approach that focuses on surface errors. Citing numerous examples to support the fact that BW students do respond to instruction, Shaughnessy encourages teachers to accept the challenge of teaching them and to change their attitude from one of hopelessness to one of hope: teachers must believe BM students are capable of learning to write.

While the purpose of Perl's study (1978) was to increase understanding of the composing processes of adult unskilled college writers, Perl recognized the relation between attitude and the composing process and raised

some interesting questions about student perceptions and memories concerning writing: What preconceptions do students have concerning writing? What are their memories of writing instruction? What are their attitudes toward themselves as writers? How do they characterize these attitudes? What effect has their home environment had on their attitudes and expectations concerning writing? What is their definition of a "good" writer?

In the past, most researchers have offered impressionistic views about how students feel about writing. However, because feelings about writing are not always readily observable and an observer's impressions are subject to bias, there has been a move recently to document these feelings, particularly fear of writing, empirically.

The term "writing apprehension" was coined by Daly and Miller (1975a) to describe an individual difference characterized by general avoidance of writing. In an effort to identify apprehensive writers, Daly and Miller (1975a) developed an empirically based standardized self-report instrument to measure general anxiety about written communication. The Writing Apprehension Measure (see Chapter 3) uses a Likert-type scale format and is composed of twenty-six items. The items, presented at random in an attempt to prevent any response bias, include (self, peer, teacher, and professional) evaluation of writing; beliefs about writing and writing instruction; associations with writing; confidence in writing ability; and writing behavior. A single score is used to infer the writer's location on a bipolar affective dimension.

Following the development of this instrument, Daly focused on the effects of writing apprehension and sought to validate the Writing Apprehension Measure. In a series of studies, Daly examined the interrelation between attitudes, particularly apprehension about writing, and various other outcomes—message intensity (Daly and miller, 1975b); SAT scores, success expectations, willingness to take advanced courses and sex differences (Daly and Miller, 1975c); occupational choice (Daly and Shamo, 1976); message encoding (Daly, 1977); writing competency (Daly, 1978); and academic decisions (Daly and Shamo, 1978).

Daly found that, compared to writers with low apprehension, writers with high apprehension encoded significantly less intense messages, choosing neutral and flat words, write less and qualified their writing less, were willing to take more course work in writing, and chose occupations with lower writing requirements. As expected, males had higher scores than females on the writing apprehension measure, and the correlation between scores on the SAT-verbal test, which deals primarily with aptitude variables, and scores on the Writing Apprehension Measure, which deals primarily with attitudinal variables, was low. Daly and Miller also learned that high apprehensives perceived their past experiences in writing as less successful. This finding suggests one possible source of writing apprehension--previous negative experiences with writing.

In a survey of a large group of elementary and secondary school teachers, Daly (1979) found that ppor skill development showed the highest correlation with writing apprehension. While Daly admitted that "many of the most important competencies and skills which contribute to writing (ideas, for example) are not and indeed probably could not, be assessed through an objective testing procedure," he nevertheless attempted to objectify writing competency because he wanted to arrive at a score that could be compared statistically to a score on the Writing Apprehension Measure (Daly, 1978, p. 13). The test of writing competency, which he referred to as a "writing competency questionnaire," contained 68 multiple-choice items testing use of case, punctuation, capitalization, agreement, adjectives and adverbs, diction, subordination, and parallelism as well as the ability to recognize faulty references or pronouns, misspellings and sentence fragments. Daly found, as he expected, that low apprehensives scored significantly better on this skills-type test than high apprehensives. However, because it is highly unlikely that Daly's writing competency test measures what it purports to measure--as Daly even admitted--his findings, although statistically "neat," are questionable.

Other researchers have also studied the effects of writing apprehension. Book (1976) discovered that high apprehensives generate fewer words and convey less information in writing than low apprehensives. Bova (1979) found that high apprehensives avoid risk-taking and personal disclosure

through a passive and unthreatening writing style and rhetorical voice. Book's and Bova's findings substantiate previous research, suggesting that anxious persons lack confidence in their opinions and judgments and, consequently, are likely to reduce the risk of exposure. Like Daly and Miller, these researchers speculate that this reticence may well be associated with prior writing experience, and area that Book claims needs further research.

Powers (1979) explored one possible cause of writing apprehension--compulsory writing--and concluded that compulsory writing generally increased the writing apprehension of college freshmen enrolled in a basic composition course.

Still other researchers focus on "treatment" methodologies for helping apprehensive writers, as identified by the Writing Apprehension Measure. For Cope (1978), effective "treatment" cannot begin until possible causes of writing anxiety are ascertained. Cope notes several possible causes: procrastination, inability to organize extensive research, misguided perfectionism, and impatience at the editing and proofreading stage. Suggested treatment methodologies include: freewriting, daily writing, positive self-talk, relaxation training, time-management, systematic desensitization, teaching organization skills and writing as process. Bloom (1980 a, b, in press) initiated a series of five-week workshops specifically designed to reduce writing anxiety to a level where it could act as a productive stimulus to writing. Bloom contends that while the teaching of writing as a process is desirable for all student writers, it is especially appropriate for anxious writers whose writing processes may be ineffective. Fox (1980), in an intervention study, discovered that student-centered instruction reduced writing apprehension at a faster rate than conventional teacher-centered instruction.

Pfeifer (1981) sought to analyze the effectiveness of peer evaluation of writing on writing anxiety and writing performance. Her sample consisted of ninety students enrolled in freshman composition. The results of the study indicate that peer evaluation did not affect either writing anxiety or writing performance. Pfeifer observed that identical levels of writing

anxiety in two students did not always influence the written product in the same way because of personality differences. Reducing writing anxiety, Pfeifer suggests, does not necessarily contribute to an increase in the quality of writing performance. She suggests researchers address anxiety control rather than reduction.

Usually only the affective dimension of attitude is measured and treated by researchers. For example, while the bipolar scales developed by Daly and Miller (1975a) contained attitudinal variables, these scales yield a single score which indicates an individual's evaluation of writing and is not intended to reflect the cognitive dimension in a precise manner. Writer's block--a psychogenic problem of many highly apprehensive writers--is also usually described as an affective difficulty. Recently, however, some researchers have focused on cognitive operations that may impede the flow of writing. Harris (1979) surveyed a group of several hundred college freshmen to learn the varieties of guidelines and/or misinformation that exist in student-writer's minds and concluded that students have many misconceptions about writing which may impede their writing. Rose (1980), after interviewing five blockers and five nonblockers, found that blockers were stymied by rigid rules and inflexible plans.

Bell (1982) compared the attitudes toward writing of basic writing students and their tutors, upper-division college students. She asked both groups of students (120 in total) to write descriptions of themselves as writers. All students said they found writing difficult and not one student admitted liking to write. However, Bell found a fundamental contrast between the self-descriptions of basic writing and upper-division students: the more experienced student writers had higher internal standards--higher expectations of themselves than other people had of them. While they frequently express dissatisfaction with their work, Bell pointed out that they have

> learned to accept their insecurities as a natural part of the composing process, and they have developed personal ways of dealing with or combating anxiety. They know that recognizing a

> gap between their accomplishments and their ultimate goals is not necessarily a sign of failure; likewise, they do not confuse a difficult task with an unsuccessful one (p. 9).

The basic writers, Bell argued, lack this perspective: "They do not expect much from their papers... All too often, they describe--and presumably think of--their papers... as collections of connected misspelled words with occasional sentence structure shifts" (p. 9).

While the purpose of Bell's study was to compare the attitudes toward writing of unskilled and skilled writers, she speculated that unskilled writers lack a sense of control over their own writing because they lack experience as writers. During the course of the semester, the tutors and basic writers worked together, evaluating each other's work and sharing both the successes and failures. "Each group," observed bell, "was able to add a dimension to the other group's conception of what it means to be a person writing" (p. 9). By the end of the semester, most BW students had positive attitudes toward writing and themselves as writers, and the tutors felt more confident about their own writing.

While researchers have begun to explore the relationship between beliefs and feelings about writing and writing behavior, more in-depth exploration is needed. In case studies of skilled and unskilled writers, researchers have often included some account of writing histories. Including the development of attitude toward writing. Several researchers have also implied or hypothesized that prior negative experience with writing is generally the source of the development of negative attitude toward writing; however, possible sources of negative attitude toward writing have yet to be the focus of an extensive research study.

Attitude Toward Writing--Theoretical Perspective

While most attitude theorists would agree that attitude is a learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorable toward an attitude object

or concept (writing, for example), many argue over whether attitude is a multi-dimensional or unidimensional concept (Fishbein, 1967a, c). Those who adhere to the classical multi-dimensional view divide attitude into three dimensions: (1) cognitive, (2) affective and (3) behavioral. The cognitive dimension represents an individual's beliefs or perceptions about an attitude object; the affective dimension represents the degree of positive or negative feeling an individual has toward an attitude object; and the behavioral dimension represents actual behavior with regard to an attitude object or an individual's intentions to behave in particular ways (Fishbein, 1967a b). Those attitude theorists who adhere to the unidimensional view consider attitudinal only the affective, or evaluative, dimension--the degree of positive or negative feeling.

The assumption in this study is that the relationship among all three dimensions is dynamic. Any change in one dimension has the potential to affect another dimension. This study explores the cognitive dimension, specifically the role beliefs play in the formation of attitude toward writing, which, in turn, affects writing behavior and the development of writing abilities.

Attitudes are usually measured by assessing a person's beliefs (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). While many beliefs may be held about a concept, some beliefs may be held more intensely than others. No one belief is a reliable indicator of attitude (Thurstone, 1928). Each intensely held belief tips the attitude scale in one direction or another and collectively, the most salient beliefs--those highest in the hierarchy--determine attitude (Fishbein, 1963, 1965a, 1965b).

Beliefs take the form of hypotheses (Fishbein, 1967a, d) or personal constructs (Kelly, 1963) and guide behavior. Writers are guided by their beliefs about writing. Some beliefs may be helpful, contributing to a more positive attitude, while other beliefs interfere, contributing to a more negative attitude. For example, a student writer might believe that she can't write because she struggles whenever she writes and struggling, to her, means that you can't write. These beliefs may be based on other

beliefs--there is a way to write which is known by professional writers who (she believes) write without struggle. Several misconceptions about the act of writing--beliefs which contrast with the way experienced writers work--may lead to a highly negative attitude toward writing and interfere with the development of writing abilities. (For a discussion of misconceptions about the act of writing, see Smith, 1981b).

Whether or not a belief is helpful depends in part upon the meaning attached to the belief. An experienced writer and an inexperienced writer, for example, could both believe that writing is a process. However, if their understanding of writing process is different, then their writing behavior will be guided by different beliefs. The experienced writer might believe that writing is a non-linear process. Since, according to recent research in composing and accounts by established writers reported elsewhere in this chapter, the nature of writing/thinking is recursive, the belief that writing should be thought out in advance and follow certain steps--a belief which does not correspond to reality--could hinder developing writers.

Many professional writers construe writing as a process of discovery (Murray, 1968, 1978). They write to learn what they are thinking about. This belief could also prove beneficial to inexperienced writers who are frustrated with dissonance, believing they must formulate a thesis statement and detailed outline (know exactly what they want to write) before they write. However, this belief would not be helpful if they also believed discovery to be the exclusive province of "creative writers." The second belief would have to be revised in order for the first belief to be helpful.

While beliefs, like attitudes, often appear fixed, they are potentially open to change. To understand how beliefs (and attitudes) may be changed, it is necessary to understand how beliefs are formed. Some beliefs may be formed through direct observation or experience (descriptive beliefs). Other beliefs (inferential beliefs) may be formed indirectly from interaction with others as well as from residues of past experiences (prior inferences). Many of our beliefs, however, are formed by accepting information from outside sources, such as newspapers, magazines, books, television, friends and teachers (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

Belief revision (and attitude change) is a process. Initially, a prior belief may be called into question and a new belief may be tentatively formed. A belief may be formed on the basis of one source--direct experience, for example. However, if this new belief is not reinforced, either through more direct experience and/or another source, then it is not likely to become salient and replace a prior belief, particularly if the prior belief was intensely held over a long period of time. If a new belief does not become hierarchically dominant, then it will not significantly affect attitude, since attitude is determined by salient beliefs. Reinforcement, then, plays an important role in belief revision and attitude change.

On the basis of information provided by teachers and textbooks, students might, for example, believe they should follow certain steps in the act of writing, that there is a way to write. On the other hand, a new event--for example, listening to a professional writer discuss his writing process--may influence students to revise, or at least question, a number of beliefs about the nature of writing and eventually construct new beliefs. They might come to believe, for example, that many writers struggle, that there is no set formula for effective writing and that they could write if they wanted to put in the time and effort to work through the complex process of making meaning. However, if these beliefs are not reinforced--if their teachers do not act on these beliefs and change their own behavior, as well as the classroom environment--then student writers' new beliefs are likely to fade and they will continue to be guided by misconceptions about the act of writing.

Another problem which inexperienced writers often suffer from is writing anxiety, stemming from problems with dissonance. Either they become frustrated with dissonance because they believe they should be able to think clearly from the start or they do not allow for dissonance/thinking/discovery. Instead, they write formulaically and become anxious about external constraints--length, grammar, spelling, punctuation. They do not separate composing and editing; instead, they try to edit while composing. Some students do get better at formula writing; they produce perfect school English, termed "English" by Macrorie (1970). However, competent "schooled" editing often suffocates emergent meaning.

Some student writers, nevertheless, develop their writing abilities in spite of being required by teachers to write artifically--to separate thinking and writing. These writers, however, are usually already competent writers of school-sponsored writing and/or talented writers outside school. Accounts by established writers revealed that training in formal outlining, for example, had no influence on their actual planning practices (Emig, 1971).

If students' beliefs about writing are revised to correspond with the way established writers work, inexperienced writers will have a more realistic understanding of the nature of writing. This new understanding is likely to positively affect their attitudes toward themselves as writers and toward the act of writing. It is possible, however, that although they have a more realistic understanding of the nature of writing, a movement in a positive direction, that they may still have negative attitudes toward writing. They could, in other words, experience other kinds of attitudinal interference. For example, they might not be ready for the struggle, even though they better understand writing as a complex congnitive recursive process and recognize the role of dissonance in writing/thinking. Perhaps if developing writers continue to practice writing and experience some success, they will come to believe the struggle is worthwhile, even exciting.

Composing as an Inner-Directed Process

Until recently, the end product of writing--the written text--was scrupulously examined, while the process remained mysterious. Within the last two decades, composition researchers shifted their attention from the written product to the composing process. Rohman (1965) hypothesized that the composing process consisted of a series of stages: (1) prewriting, (2) writing and (3) rewriting, and the discrete stage notion of composing became widely accepted. Accepting this notion, however, also meant accepting composing as a linear one-directional process. Was this, in fact, an accurate description of how experienced writers worked?

In recent years, many researchers (Emig, 1971; Britton et al., 1975; Perl, 1978, 1980; Pianko, 1979; Somers, 1979, 1980; Flower and Hayes, 1980,

1981) began to study writers at work in order to gain insight into the composing process. Studies of protocols (transcripts of writers' tape-recorded thoughts while composing) revealed that writers actually move in series of non-linear movements from one sub-process to another. Planning, for example, is not limited to prewriting nor revision to rewriting; instead, planning and revision occur throughout the composing process (Flower and Hayes, 1981). The entire process may be viewed as one of revision (Somers, 1980). The discrete stage model of the composing process turned out to be based on the growth of the external written product rather than on the writer's inner process: it was product-centered rather than process-centered. Composition theorists and researchers began to advocate that the nature of the composing process was recursive.

Composition theorist Berthoff (1981) describes the recursive nature of composing as a "dialectic of forming":

> a nonlinear, dialectical process in which the writer continually circles back, reviewing the rewriting...We don't have ideas that we put into words; we don't think of what we want to say and then write. In composing, we make meanings. We find the forms of thought by means of language, and we find the forms of language by taking thought. (pp. 3, 69).

Berthoff's description of the composing process is rooted in Vygotsky's description of the concept-forming process and the dialectical relationship of thought and language. Vygotsky (1962) describes conceptualizing as

> a movement of thought constantly alternating in two directions...from inner to outer planes... from the motive which engenders a thought to the shaping of the thought, first in inner speech, then in meanings of words, and finally in words. (p. 80)

The plane between word and thought Britton (1975) describes as an "actively operational area" (p. 39).

Meaning-making is the work of an active mind: "Meanings don't come out of the air; we make them out of a chaos of images, half-truths, remembrances, syntactic fragments, from the mysterious and unformed" (Berthoff,

1981, p. 70). A writer must learn to tolerate ambiguity (Elbow, 1973) and to make meaning (form concepts) out of chaos: "Learning the uses of chaos is a method of learning to intuit the relationship of parts in a whole that is coming into being, which in compositional terms means coming to mean: the juncture of thought and language in the making of meaning" (Berthoff, 1981, p. 57).

In an attempt to explore the recurring features of backward movement in writing, Perl (1980) observed the composing processes of many types of writers including college students. She found three recursive features. Two, which involved re-reading bits of discourse and focusing on the topic, were easy to document. However, a third recursive movement, because the move occurs inside the writer, was not so easy to document. Borrowing from philosopher Eugene Gendlin (1978), Perl termed this focus of the writer's attention to inner reflections "felt sense."

Perl has labeled this process of attending, of calling up a felt sense and of writing out of that place, the process of retrospective structuring.

> In the process of writing, we begin with what is inchoate and end with something that is tangible. In order to do so, we both discover and construct what we mean. Yet the term 'discover' ought not lead us to think that meaning exists fully formed inside of us and that all we need do is dig deep enough to release it. In writing, meaning cannot be discovered the way we discover an object on an archeological dig...[Writing] involves us in a process of coming-into-being. (p. 367)

When writers are successful at what Perl refers to as the process of retrospective structuring or coming-into-being (what Berthoff calls the meaning-making process), they end up with a product that teaches them something, that clarifies what they know (or what they knew at one point only implicitly), and that "lifts out or explicates or enlarges" their experience (p. 368). "Meaning is not what you start out with but what you end up with" (Elbow, 1973, p. 15).

Descriptions of the composing process by established writers, particularly with regard to planning, differ markedly from descriptions by many composition teachers and textbooks. Emig (1971) contrasts a description of the composing process in a widely used handbook with accounts by professional writers. The handbook suggests that "writing is a tidy, accretive affair that proceeds by elaborating a fully pre-conceived and formulated plan," while professional writers describe writing as a process of discovery (p. 22). "The writer listens for evolving meaning" (Murray, 1982) or to what Britton (1978) calls the "inner voice": writers "shape at the point of utterance" (Britton, 1972).

Murray (1968, 1978) quotes numerous professional writers who link writing with discovery.

Edward Albee: Writing has got to be an act of discovery...I write to find out what I'm thinking about.

James Baldwin: You go into a book and you're in the dark, really. You go in with a certain fear and trembling. You know one thing. You know you will not be the same person when this voyage is over. But you don't know what's going to happen to you between getting on the boat and stepping off.

Alan Dugan: When I'm successful, I find the poem will come out saying something that I didn't know, believe, or had intellectually agreed with.

Joanne Greenberg: Your writing is trying to tell you something. Just lend an ear.

Gabriel Fielding: Writing to me is a voyage, an odyssey, a discovery, because I'm never certain of precisely what I will find.

E.M. Forster: How do I know what I think until I see what I say?

Henry Miller: Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery.

Wright Morris: The language leads, and we continue to follow where it leads.

(1978, pp. 101-102)

(For more accounts by professional writers concerning the act of writing, see Writers at Work; The Paris Review Interviews, edited by M. Crowley, 1957; 1963; 1967; 1974; 1982.) "The process of writing--of using language to discover meaning and communicate—is a significant human act," concludes Murray. "The better we understand how people write--how people think--the better we may be able to write and to teach writing" (p. 101).

Somers (1980) observed that student writers "constantly struggle to bring their essays into congruence with a predefined meaning" while experienced writers do the opposite: "they seek (to create) meaning" (p. 385). The complex dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole in the work of experienced writers destroys the linear model: "Writing cannot develop like a line because each addition or a deletion is a reordering of the whole...Writing appears to be more a seed than a line" (pp. 385, 386).

Inexperienced writers, such as those Shaughnessy (1977) and Perl (1978) studied, are particularly uncomfortable with dissonance. Perl (1980) observed that the degree to which skilled and unskilled writers use the process of retrospective structuring depends upon the model of the writing process they have internalized:

> Those who realize that writing can be recursive process have an easier time with writing, looking, and discovering. Those who subscribe to the linear model find themselves easily frustrated when what they write does not immediately correspond to what they planned or when what they produce leaves them with little sense of accomplishment. Since they have relied on a formulaic approach, they often produce writing that is formulaic as well, thereby cutting themselves off from the possibilities of discovering something new (p. 368).

Learning to write involves "learning to tolerate ambiguity, of learning that the making of meaning is a dialectical process" (Berthoff, 1981, p. 71).

Pianko (1979a) noted that unskilled college writers were overly concerned with "correct" wording during composing and were anxious unless they were actually transcribing.

> During their pause, they were usually glancing around the room or staring into mid-air, sometines as a diversion and at other times in the hope that the correct spelling or the correct word or something else to say would suddenly appear to them. They usually did not rescan their own text for the help they needed. Perhaps they did not feel they could find the answers in their own writing. (p. 276)

Because they were only "subsidiarily aware" of thinking and were "focally aware" of text presentation (Polyani, 1962), the act of writing accomplished little for these inexperienced writers. "Undue concern with transcription," notes Smith (1981), "can interfere with composition, the creative and exploratory aspect of writing..." (p. 794).

Based on a detailed study of how fluent writers work, Smith (1981) discusses twenty-one basic misconceptions about the nature of writing and about the manner in which proficient writers usually write--misconceptions commonly held by inexperienced writers and their teachers, including those in this study. "Writing in many classrooms," concludes Smith, "is an unnatural activity" (p. 792).

Pianko (1979b) found that if writing was school-sponsored and had to be written within limits prescribed by the teacher, the composing process was inhibited: "There is just so much energy a person is willing to give to please others..There seemed to be very little gained from the composing act except meeting a school requirement" (pp. 11, 12). Concludes Pianko, "Teachers must..include writing experiences...which evolve from within students" (p. 18).

Britton et al. (1975) observed that often student writers only became involved at the extrinsic level of satisfaction; they satisfied only the minimum demands of the writing tasks, which resulted in what he calls "perfunctory writing." However, when intrinsically involved, when they make the tasks their own--in Perl's terms, when their "felt sense deepened"--they began to satisfy themselves as well as their teachers.

Emig (1971) concluded that composition teaching is essentially other-directed.

> The concern is with sending a message, a communication out into the world for the edification, enlightenment, and ultimately the evaluation of another. Too often, the other is a teacher, interested chiefly in a product he can criticize rather than a process he can help initiate through imagination and sustain through empathy and support. (p. 97)

As we continue to learn about the psychological processes involved in writing, through more observational studies and accounts of experienced writers, the salient belief that writing is an outer-directed process implied in various teaching methods will continue to be challenged.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Three college freshmen who were full-time students at Old Dominion University (ODU), Norfolk, Virginia, served as case study participants. Two were female (white) and one was male (white). Each had graduated in June 1981 from a high school within a twenty-five mile radius of ODU. Placed in basic writing, on the basis of a university-wide Writing Sample Placement Test (WSPT), each participant was enrolled in a basic writing class at ODU's Writing Center during thefall term, 1981. The three student writers varied in their degree of negative attitude toward writing (from slightly to highly negative). Selection procedures will be discussed under "Data Collection."

Old Dominion University is a state-supported urban regional university in the southeastern Virginia city of Norfolk with an enrollment of over 15,000 students. Forty-five percent of ODU's entering students are graduates from high schools within a twenty-five mile radius of ODU known as Tidewater, which consists of the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach.

Although ODU is not an open-admissions university, the door is open quite wide: to be admitted to ODU, students must have a combined SAT score of 950 and rank in the upper half of their graduating class, with better-than average (C) grades in at least twelve academic subjects. If students meet only one qualification, they may be admitted provisionally, by invitation, through the Academic Opportunity Program (AOP). One of the participants in this study was admitted through this program.

Approximately one-third of the students who enter Old Dominion University each fall manifest difficulty in writing and are placed, on the basis of a university-wide Writing Sample Placement Test (WSPT), in basic writing classes at the Writing Center rather than in freshman composition. Students

are placed in basic writing classes for a variety of reasons. They may fail to adhere to several conventions (for example, spelling, punctuation, syntax, usage) to the extent that much of the meaning of their texts is lost and/or their essays may reflect a lack of understanding of the writing process and test-taking strategies (for dealing with the constraints of task, time and length). The three participants in this study were representative of those who fail the WSPT. (See Appendix A for test copies and results).

Whether students are placed in basic writing or freshman composition, their writing abilities can be developed: they can become more skilled in writing; they can become more mature writers. Many students who pass ODU's WSPT and place in freshman composition are still unskilled/basic/developing writers and may have negative attitudes which interfere, in varying degrees, with the development of their writing abilities. Those students who fail this test can generally be considered, except in borderline cases perhaps, more unskilled in writing than those who pass. Also, because the very placement in basic writing often, at least initially, causes already existing negative attitudes to surface, the three research participants were selected from this population.

The field of research was limited to the Tidewater area of Virginia so that travel would be minimal and the data easily accessible. Furthermore, the groundwork for this research had already been laid. The researcher had made presentations at various Tidewater schools and had already interviewed over fifty high school English teachers and their supervisors in Tidewater in connection with a pilot study (1980).

Data Collection

In tracing the development of negative attitude toward writing from the secondary to the postsecondary level, I used a case study approach, borrowing from ethnographic techniques. To cross-check data, thus maximizing the validity of the study, I utilized a variety of information-gathering devices: a survey instrument, collections of writing samples, informal written responses to questions and topics, structured interviews and participant observation.

In the beginning of a basic writing (BW) class, which I also taught, I administered the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Measure to fifteen possible research participants--students who were placed in basic writing and had graduated from high schools in the Tidewater area of Virginia.

Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Measure (1975)

> Directions: Below are a series of statements. please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are uncertain (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with the statement. While some of these statements may seem repetitious, take your time and try to be as honest as possible. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

1. I avoid writing.
2. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated.
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas.
4. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated.
5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience.
6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good.
7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition.
8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.
9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaulation and publication.
10. I like to write my ideas down.
11. I feel confident in my ability to cearly express my ideas in writing.
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written.
13. I'm nervous about writing.
14. People seem to enjoy what I write.
15. I enjoy writing.
16. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas.
17. Writing is a lot of fun.
18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them.
19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.
20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.
21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course.
22. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly.
23. It's easy for me to write good compositions.
24. I don't think I write as well as most other people.
25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated.
26. I'm no good at writing.

The formula for scoring is: Writing Apprehension = 78 + Positive Scores - Negative Scores.

Single scores may range from a low of 26 to a high of 130. In the sample of 15, the mean score was 68.8 with a standard deviation of 13.2. Individuals scoring one standard deviation above the mean score (82) on writing apprehension were classified as high apprehensives, while those scoring one standard deviation below were classified as low apprehensives. The remaining individuals were classified as moderately apprehensive.

Jan	65	Moderately Apprehensive
Tom	69	"
Charlene	98	Highly Apprehensive

Figure 1. Scores of the three research participants on the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Measure.

This measurement instrument uses a Likert-type scale format with five possible responses per item, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and provides a quick means of identifying students with negative attitudes toward writing. While many of the twenty-six items are specifically concerned with writing anxiety (for example, Item 13--"I'm nervous about writing."), many others are concerned with general attitude toward writing (for example, Item 15--"I enjoy writing.").

While a survey is useful as a starting point in defining and describing attitudes toward writing and later as a reference point in cross-checking information obtained through journal entries, personal interviews and observations, it is not the best means for uncovering the development of an attitude. Tracing the development of an attitude requires a human observer, who can see in the responses a pattern which will lead to an interpretation. Consequently, to collect data, I relied on nonstandardized instruments, including myself.

The writing samples collected included the Writing Sample Placement Test (WSPT) and informal written responses to questions/topics concerning writing and students' perceptions of themselves as writers, such as (1) How do you see yourself as a writer? (2) Recollections of how you learned to write, (3) Writing is like... (4) What problems did you encounter in writing? and (5) How do you feel about the piece of writing you are submitting for evaluation? These responses, written in the first three weeks of the semester-long basic writing course, were used as a cross-check of data derived from the objective survey instrument.

High school records were also checked to obtain verbal SAT scores, coursework in English and grades received, grade point average and class rank.

Next, structured interviews were conducted with all fifteen students to learn their writing histories, including their perceptions and memories of writing instruction. The interviews provided a wealth of information to consider before narrowing my study to three cases, as well as a broader understanding of the development of attitude toward writing.

For all interviews with students, I used a core of questions, based on items from the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Measure.

Student Interview Guide--Writing History

1. Do you enjoy writing?
2. Do you fear your writing being evaluated?
3. Do you look forward to writing down your ideas?
4. Is taking a composition course a frightening experience?
5. Does handing in a composition make you feel good?
6. Does your mind go blank when you start to write a composition?
7. Do you think expressing ideas through writing is a waste of time?
8. Would you enjoy submitting your writing to magazines for evaulation and publication?
9. Does writing ever make you nervous?
10. Are you able to clearly write down your ideas? Do you have difficulty organizing your ideas?
11. Is it generally easy for you to write good compositions?
12. Do you expect to d poorly in compositon classes even before entering them?
13. Do you think you write as well as most other people?
14. Do you write letters often?
15. Do you like to have your friends read your writing?
16. Do you think doing workbook exercises helps you improve your writing?

17. Do you accept positions in groups that involve writing?
18. Do you think of the teacher as the audience for most school writing?
19. Can you recall experiences with writing in elementary school? Junion High?
20. How much writing did you do in high school? What kind?
21. What were your feelings going into the Writing Sample Placement Test (WSPT)? When you left? How did you feel when you learned the results?

I also added individualized questions based on information derived from other sources, such as informal writing high school records and observations. In the interviews, I asked students to recall and discuss prior writing experiences as far back as elementary school. (See Appendix B for representative examples of transcripts of interviews.)

All interviews were conducted and tape-recorded in the privacy of my office and generally forty-five minutes. Students were interviewed only once. With all students, I was informal and casual but purposeful during the interviews. While some students reluctantly entered my office, uncertain of the purpose of the interview and how they should behave, once I explained the purpose and the interview was in progress, they relaxed and seemed pleased to have the one-to-one attention, especially in college. From the start, students seemed to view me more as an interested teacher conducting research than as an impersonal researcher, and the rapport established during the interviews carried over into the classroom setting.

I not only was a writing teacher/tutor but also a researcher/observer and moved back and forth between the two roles in my basic writing class. For example, I would sometimes interrupt students in the process of writing and ask them what they were doing and why. After recording information in my role as a researcher/observer, I would often shift to my teacher/tutor role and intervene, perhaps suggesting another strategy or raising a question.

Also early in the BW class, I observed and recorded in a journal how the fifteen students behaved when confronted with writing tasks and what strategies they followed to complete these tasks. I noted those students who were particularly interested in their writing histories. After collecting all data on fifteen students, I then selected three students for in-depth study and collected additional data.

Selection Procedures

Initially, I ranked the sampling of fifteen students according to their scores on the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Measure. Then, I cross-checked this ranking with information derived from selected writing tasks, observations, and interviews, and placed the fifteen students into one of four categories:

(1) highly negative attitude toward writing,
(2) mid-negative attitude toward writing,
(3) slightly negative attitude toward writing, and
(4) positive attitude toward writing.

Students in the first category expressed a very strong dislike of writing while students in the second category had mixed feelings but leaned more toward the negative. Students in the third category found some aspect of writing particularly unenjoyable, and students in the fourth category found writing generally enjoyable. Most students placed in the second and third categories.

Of the fifteen students, three had highly negative attitudes toward writing. One of these three students wrote, "Writing is like being at a construction site for three years without food or drink." While he allowed me to interview him, he did not talk about his writing history in any detail; therefore, I did not select him for in-depth study. I finally selected another student with a highly negative attitude toward writing and two others whose attitudes varied from slightly to mid-negative. In order to get some consensus that there was a range of negative attitudes, I asked two basic writing instructors and a director of a basic writing program to

categorize roughly the three participants according to their attitudes toward writing. For the purpose of this study, defining the precise degree of negative attitude toward writing for each student was not crucial; rather, it was important that the three selected participants represented a range of negative attitudes from slightly to highly negative.

After selecting three research participants out of the sampling of fifteen, I conducted interviews with the former high school English teachers of each to cross-check information derived from interviews with the three students and learn how these teachers perceived writing, writing instruction and these particular students' attitudes toward writing. To avoid teachers being defensive and to maximize data collection, I began by asking case-specific questions, sometimes seeking teachers' reactions to quotations from student interviews, rather than questioning teachers about their own attitudes and practices. Again, I used a core of questions as well.

Teacher Interview Guide

1. Would you briefly describe the course or courses _____ took with you?
2. How would you describe _____'s attitude toward writing?
3. Instructions for Writing
   a. Do you provide topics.
   b. Do you ask students to write for different audiences?
4. Kinds of Writing
   a. Essay responses?
   b. Journals?
   c. Other?
5. Support for Writing
   a. How do you help students with their writing?
   b. Do you deal with student writing only after it is finished or do you involve yourself in the writing process? If you involve yourself, how?
   c. Do your students engage in peer reading? If so, how much time is devoted to this activity?
   d. What approach do you take if a student is having difficulty?
6. Evaluation
   a. How do you evaluate a piece of writing? What do you look for?
   b. When do you evaluate?
   c. What form (or forms) does your evaluation take? Grades? Written responses?
   d. How did _____ respond to your evaluation?
7. What is your reaction to _____'s WSPT?

All questions from the interview guide were not asked of English teachers who had students in classes that involved little writing, such as traditional grammar classes.

The interviews were conducted in high schools during the teachers' free/planning periods and generally lasted forty-five minutes. Teachers were interviewed once, and the interviews, when permission was granted, were tape-recorded and later transcribed. (See Appendix B).

While all teachers initially perceived tape recording as somewhat inhibiting or threatening, most teachers overcame their anxieties and allowed the interview to be taped. Only one teacher refused; in this instance, I took notes and asked the teacher to check their accuracy. In two cases, one teacher, due to relocation, was unavailable, and in another case, a teacher could not recall the student. Most teachers, however, were available, interested, cooperative, and remembered their former students very well.

Assistant principals were almost always responsible for scheduling the interviews. Some only notified the teachers and left the place of the interviews up to me, while others suggested or arranged a meeting place. Some assistant principals, and some principals, were curious about my research, and some even offered information about students in my study and views about student attitude toward writing in general.

Interview locations within the schools varied. Sometimes I stayed in a library conference room or an English office or faculty dining room and teachers came to me; other times I interviewed teachers in their own classrooms.

Because I knew that initially I would be perceived as an outsider, I was sensitive to the way I entered the high school setting, careful to establish a role that would facilitate the collection of data. I made every effort to learn teachers' perspectives inside the school setting. By the end of the interviews, teachers seemed to shift their view of me as an outsider/researcher to a classroom teacher conducting research.

One high school English teacher was extremely cautious. As I entered her classroom, she stopped me with a barrage of questions: Are you a graduate student conducting research? Are you a full-time member of the faculty of ODU? Do you teach writing? When I told her I was a full-time writing teacher at ODU and a former high school English teacher, I sensed her approval and proceeded with the interview. She responded honestly and at length to my questions. Indeed, she sacrificed her lunch break so that we could talk further and even invited me to return after I had interviewed other teachers.

At the other extreme, some teachers were eager to chat even before I explained the purpose of my research, and they did not appear interested in my background excet that I was from ODU. Some teachers were reluctant to sacrifice their own "free" period; some felt they could not be helpful; some wondered whether I could be trusted; but all seemed glad to have an interested listener.

All tape-recorded interviews with students and teachers were transcribed within one week following the interviews and read before being filed for later study.

Data Analysis

Instead of collecting all data before subjecting it to interpretation, I began interpreting each piece of evidence as it became available during the process of research. Thus I immediately began developing a case, following the approach suggested by Diesing (1971). Several kinds of evidence (a survey, observation in-depth interviews) were used to build each case. Over the project period, evidence gradually accumulated until various observations started to form a tentative pattern.

Since I could not go back in time and observe the participants in high school, I relied on their memories and self-reported data disclosed in interviews. While self-reporting is problematic because of possible distortion, this researcher believes we are also guided by our "distortions" or personal truths--our perceptions of events. We are guided by what we be-

lieve to be true. However, by using two forms of self-reporting with participants (a survey and interviews) and cross-checking the data through interviews with others as well as through observation, distortion was minimized.

In the testimonies of the three participants, I initially considered numerous factors--self-concept; writing in school and outside school; preferred kind of writing; high school English curriculum; decision-making regarding high school English courses (if applicable); cognitive style in the interview; influence of family and peers on attitude toward writing; and attitude toward grammar instruction, reading and placement in basic writing. I gave more weight, however, to each student's reported self-concept as a writer, general attitude toward writing, amount and kind of writing practice in high school and range of audience, attitude toward writing instruction and evaluation, writing process (own and general understanding); and I gave most weight to each student's beliefs about writing and prior writing experiences in high school.

As we talked, some students were able to see and articulate connections between prior writing experience and attitude formation, while others could not make explicit connections. Sometimes the students, not having studied composition theory, perceived a writing experience as positive when, from the perspective of someone grounded in theory, it could be perceived as negative. While I recorded students' perceptions, I did not rely on them blindly. Instead, I finally depended upon my interpretation which summarized my perceptions of a variety of sources and which I cross-checked with other experts in the field.

After each interview with a student, I began to develop the case. I jotted down notes or wrote freely immediately following the interview. At that point, I tried to capture the student's perspective as a writer. A week later, I read the transcript of the interview, making both marginal and summary notes. I then cross-checked these notes with (1) earlier notes of my initial impressions, (2) other notes based on observations in the basic writing class, and (3) student responses concerning writing and attempted to synthesize the data collected to date.

In the testimonies of the teachers, I focused on teacher attitude toward writing and teachers' perceptions of the participants' attitudes toward writing. I noted my impressions following the interviews, this time taking the teachers' perspective. I then cross-checked my new notes with previous ones. A week later, I studied transcripts of teacher interviews and wrote again, reinterpreting each case.

My next step was to construct a unified picture, given the data I had collected. I reviewed and re-studied all the data, fitting together observations in a tentative pattern, and drafted each case.

In order to build a case, the case study researcher cannot remain detached like the experimenter and survey researcher but must necessarily become involved. However, I attempted to counter observer bias in several ways.

Rather than simply recording my impressions, using what ethnographers refer to as "disciplined subjectivity" (Erickson, 1973), I made every attempt to block prior knowledge and relating attitudes, accepting interviewees--without judgement or evaluation--as they were. I also cross-checked information and constantly monitored and tested my reactions throughout the research process. I encouraged students and teachers involved in the project to speculate about events which may have contributed to the development of negative attitudes toward writing (both in general and in particular cases); I informally discussed certain aspects of cases with interested colleagues; and finally, I asked experts in the field to serve as consultants and to give me their interpretations of transcripts of the interviews.

For each case, I used between five and seven consultants. The consultants included two supervisors of secondary English instruction; a director of graduate studies in English (formerly a freshman composition director); a freshman composition instructor who had also taught basic writing, two directors of university writing centers; a curriculum theorist; and one graduate student, one professor, and two coordinators of English Education. The consultants came from three different regions--the Northeast, Southeast

and Midwest--and all had a strong interest and background in composition theory and practice.

I purposely left the form and length of response up to the consultants; each handled the task differently. (See Appendix C.) I read each consultant's comments as soon as I received them, each time checking a consultant's reactions against my own. While the general interpretations of cases never conflicted, as can be expected, what consultants saw as significant varied according to their backgrounds and perspectives. In the final draft of each case study, I often quoted consultants, again in an effort to minimize subjectivity.

In writing about each case, I began with the student's self-concept as a writer and the student's attitude toward writing. I then presented the student's writing history chronologically, focusing on the high school years, and ended with my interpretation of the student's case with regard to the development of negative attitude toward writing, supported by consultants' interpretations.

After drafting the narratives for each case, I carefully studied one case (Charlene) to explore possible sources of a negative attitude toward writing. I began by identifying the student's belief about herself as a writer and, in an attempt to trace belief formation, began writing down beliefs about the nature of writing that emerged from the data. I then explored possible sources for beliefs about the nature of writing.

In addition to beliefs about self as writer and beliefs about the nature of writing, two other categories also became evident: beliefs about good writers or good writing and beliefs about the evaluation of writing. Next, I tentatively arranged the categories and beliefs hierarchically, also noting possible sources. I followed the same procedure for the other two cases whose narraties I had already drafted but began discussing possible sources in greater detail. Four categories remained consistent--beliefs about (1) the nature of writing, (2) good writing or good writers, and (3) evaluation of writing, and (4) self as writer.

CHARLENE'S CASE

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE: "I HATE WRITING."

SALIENT BELIEF ABOUT SELF AS WRITER: "I CAN'T WRITE SUCCESSFULLY FOR SCHOOL."

PART OF SYLLOGISTIC REASONING: I DO NOT KNOW THE WAY.

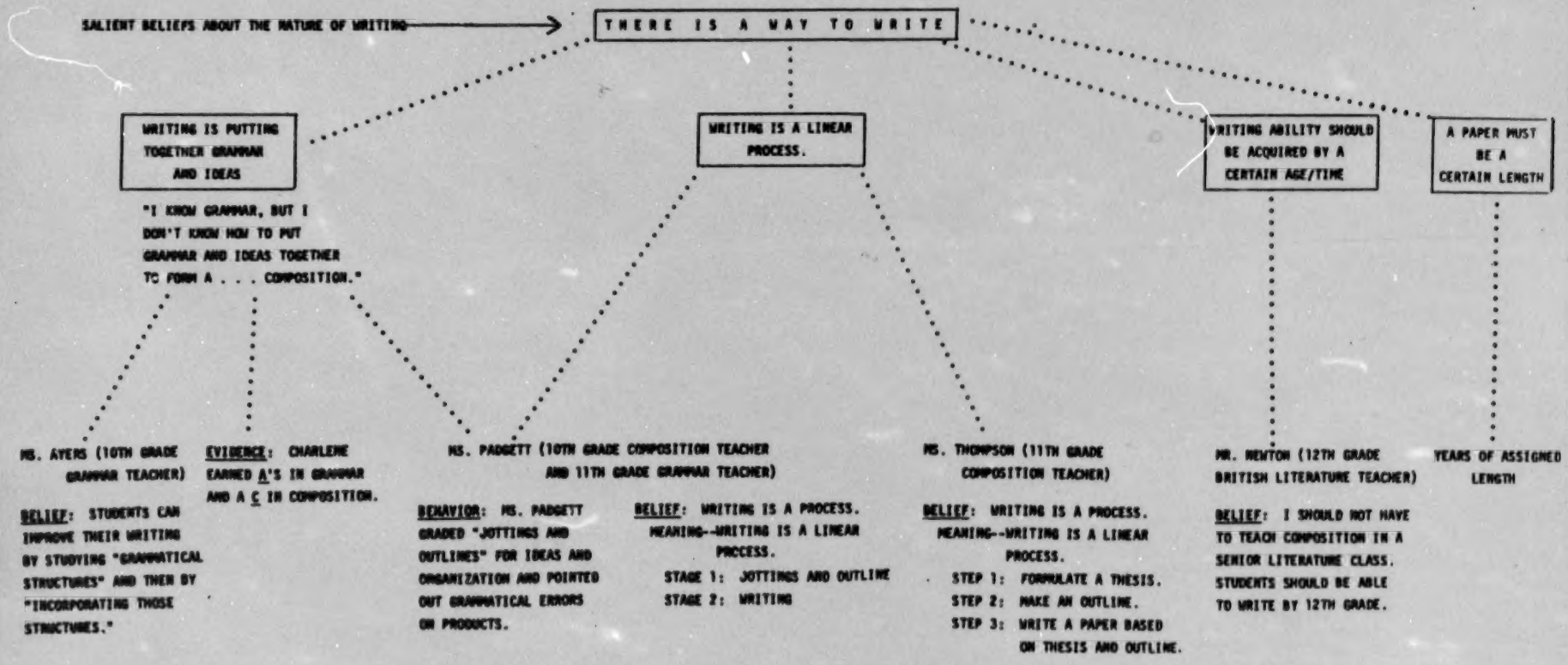
SALIENT BELIEFS ABOUT THE NATURE OF WRITING
THERE IS A WAY TO WRITE
WRITING IS PUTTING TOGETHER GRAMMAR AND IDEAS
WRITING IS A LINEAR PROCESS.
WRITING ABILITY SHOULD BE ACQUIRED BY A CERTAIN AGE/TIME
A PAPER MUST BE A CERTAIN LENGTH
"I KNOW GRAMMAR, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PUT GRAMMAR AND IDEAS TOGETHER TO FORM A . . . COMPOSITION."
MS. AYERS (10TH GRADE GRAMMAR TEACHER)
BELIEF: STUDENTS CAN IMPROVE THEIR WRITING BY STUDYING "GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES" AND THEN BY "INCORPORATING THOSE STRUCTURES."
EVIDENCE: CHARLENE EARNED A'S IN GRAMMAR AND A C IN COMPOSITION.
MS. PADGETT (10TH GRADE COMPOSITION TEACHER AND 11TH GRADE GRAMMAR TEACHER)
BEHAVIOR: MS. PADGETT GRADED "JOTTINGS AND OUTLINES" FOR IDEAS AND ORGANIZATION AND POINTED OUT GRAMMATICAL ERRORS ON PRODUCTS.
BELIEF: WRITING IS A PROCESS. MEANING--WRITING IS A LINEAR PROCESS.
STAGE 1: JOTTINGS AND OUTLINE
STAGE 2: WRITING
MS. THOMPSON (11TH GRADE COMPOSITION TEACHER)
BELIEF: WRITING IS A PROCESS. MEANING--WRITING IS A LINEAR PROCESS.
STEP 1: FORMULATE A THESIS.
STEP 2: MAKE AN OUTLINE.
STEP 3: WRITE A PAPER BASED ON THESIS AND OUTLINE.
MR. NEWTON (12TH GRADE BRITISH LITERATURE TEACHER)
BELIEF: I SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TEACH COMPOSITION IN A SENIOR LITERATURE CLASS. STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO WRITE BY 12TH GRADE.
YEARS OF ASSIGNED LENGTH

Figure 2. Some possible sources of one student's negative attitude toward writing.

After categorizing the beliefs for all three cases, I then explored possible sources for each of the beliefs. I also attempted to see how the various beliefs and categories related to each other and whether or not there was a pattern for each case and, finally, across cases.

Chapter 4

CASE HISTORIES

The language, the language
fails them
They do not know the words
or have not
the courage to use them...
William Carlos Williams

Jan's Case

At Prince Edward High School, Jan was a member of the field hockey and soccer teams and belonged to various clubs. Her teachers described Jan as "very popular." Jan attributed her popularity in school, in part, to her older brother's influence: "Being around his friends was a way of me making friends."

The total student population at Prince Edward High School is 1,550. Approximately thirty-five percent of the graduates go on to four-year colleges and an additional twenty percent to two-year postsecondary institutions. Jan graduated with a 3.3 grade point average ranking 57th out of 550 in her class.

While Jan ranked high academically in high school, her verbal SAT score was a low 330. In addition, her high error count on Old Dominion University's Writing Sample Placement Test prevented her from enrolling in freshman composition, requiring her to enroll in General Studies 050, Basic Writing. Jan was provisionally admitted to Old Dominion University through the Academic Opportunity Program.

Jan personally enjoys expressing herself in writing, for writing, in her words is a "silent way to say how I feel." As the secondary English supervisor in Jan's school system perceptively observed:

> Jan seems ripe for teaching. She already recognizes the utilitarian value of writing in studying for tests and in improving grades in all courses, and she enjoys corresponding with her grandparents, who respond positively to her letters. She also seems to have some acceptable writing habits—leaving blanks for words when she cannot find the precise ones, focusing on a thesis statement to give her direction, and freewriting from then on.

Jan seems to like writing but feels frustrated with the process of translating her ideas into words when pressured to write, as in school writing, and fears evaluation.

Jan feels she is knowledgeable but the "knowledge does not come out" when she writes: "It gets stuck up there and I write something different... Somehow I can't write what I actually mean...It's as if there was a mental barrier between thoughts in my head and...thoughts on paper." This mismatch of what she wants to write and what she actually writes frequently occurs with teacher-assigned writing. Her frustration is intensified to the point of depression by negative teacher feedback in the form of "red marks" which make her feel she "can't do anything right" and that she had wasted her time. She is "torn," in one English supervisor's words, "between the belief that teachers must criticize and the fear of red marks."

Jan's recollections of writing during her elementary and junior high school years are vague. During the first five years, she recalls doing more grammar study than writing; in sixth grade, writing monthly book reports; and in eight grade, writing about what she did over the summer. She fondly recalls her fifth, eight and ninth grade language arts teachers, whom she describes as "excellent...because they related to students on a personal level." They were teachers she could trust. Jan, observes a supervisor of English instruction, "equates teacher trust with teaching excellence."

Jan ranked her tenth and eleventh grade English teachers as her best teachers because they were personable and helpful. Ms. Wall, Jan's tenth grade English teacher, however, could not recall Jan: "There were so many like her. I see so many students. She doesn't stand out." Jan earned a slightly above average grade of "B" in English 10 and opted to take American Studies in her junior year.

Jan particularly liked Ms. Hull, her American Studies English teacher: "We were really good friends." Ms. Hull recalled that Jan worked very hard on any paper she turned in, and that when working on difficult topics, she occasionally sought help after school. She noted, too, that Jan became easily discouraged if she did not attain a high grade. Ms. Hull speculated that some of Jan's frustrations may have resulted from her feeling of inferiority to her older brother, with whom Jan was very close and who was an excellent student. Jan credited her older brother with being "the smart one in the family" and added that she felt comfortable asking him for help. Ms. Hull suspected he helped Jan with her writing and observed that Jan "seemed lost" when he left for college.

Given Jan's "B" average in American Studies, Ms. Hull recommended Jan take average English her last year and, since Jan planned to go to college, she advised her to take a semester of Advanced Composition in addition. Jan took Ms. Hull's advice: "I knew I'd be doing a lot of writing in college and needed more help in writing. I also knew senior English wasn't just all writing papers." She elected to take Advanced Composition in the spring, closest to the time she would be entering college.

Until her senior year, Jan saw herself as an "average writer." Except during her junior year, she had been in average English classes since junior high school and had thought her writing "not bad but not the best." She believed she wrote as well as most other people. While Jan's papers had their share of "red marks," her experience with school writing was generally positive and classroom environments generally supportive, enabling Jan to function productively. Because her teachers, in her eleven years of schooling, had not given her cause to think otherwise, Jan assumed her self-concept as a writer was accurate.

In her senior year, Jan's perception of herself as a writer was shaken, however, when she was told "flat out" by her senior high teacher that she "couldn't write." Ms. Brewster assumed Jan's teachers had told her this before, but Jan protested: "No...they thought my writing was average." Even though Jan knew this teacher had a reputation for "cutting people down," Ms. Brewster's negative evaluation gave Jan "a big complex." While the teacher's aggressive approach may motivate some students to perform better, Jan was intimidated and hurt by the negative, derogatory comments. She was also in a dilemma. Should she trust eleven years of generally positive response to her writing or this one senior English teacher's highly negative response?

While other teachers whom I interviewed thought it was odd that I had identified Jan as having a negative attitude toward writing--"There certainly are far worse cases"--Ms. Brewster thought Jan a "classic case of negative attitude," particularly a negative attitude toward Ms. Brewster's criticism of her writing:

> She just never liked to be criticized. When she was, she got on a high horse...I can just see her sitting in the classroom most disillusioned about herself...When we were doing the research paper, I talked to her about her style--her involved, complex, almost unintelligible sentences--and her lovely blue eyes would cloud over with tears because she could not handle the idea she was less than perfect.

"The research paper," according to Ms. Brewster, "was the big trauma." The paper was composed in stages, week by week. For two weeks, the students worked on developing thesis statements in class discussion and individual conferences. Then a preliminary outline was required the third week and so on, methodically, step-by-step through most of the semester.

The students mostly worked with teacher rather than peer comments. Ms. Brewster tried peer editing but found whenever she gave them writing to evaluate, they "just superficially criticized it." She explained: "In their senior year, they hadn't really been prepared to evaluate, and considering all I was supposed to do--produce a research paper among other things..."

Ms. Brewster believes Jan, who had been in an accelerated English class in her junior year, thought she would "breeze right through an average group with no difficulty, and then she ran up against this writing problem." According to Ms. Brewster, Jan could not

> clarify, simplify, and communicate...She was trying to be poetic and flowery and was never able to simply say something basic in a sentence...When I would show her how to switch a phrase or a clause or just cut it out, maybe cut out whole sentences, even whole paragraphs--she couldn't understand. She got this fix somewhere in the past...that to be flowery, confusing, backwards, was the thing. To simply communicate was not the thing.

Ms. Brewster also believes that part of Jan's problem was that she was so ingrained with "teenage, superficial, preppy cliches...that she was unable to pare away that superfluous dialogue and get down to what she wanted to say." Ms. Brewster explained that while Jan's language may have sounded fine to her friends, this same language was inappropriate for formal or academic writing. Ms. Brewster did not encourage students to use writing as a way of learning; she demanded academic writing at all times.

Ms. Brewster believes Jan's writing problem had been developed for years but that since none of her teachers had told her, Jan developed an unrealistic picture of herself as a writer. Ms. Brewster did not hesitate to tell Jan she had a writing problem; however, she did not believe she could help Jan: "Jan never really saw the problem. I had the feeling all through the year that she felt I was the villain, I was wrong." While this teacher was not wrong about Jan being an unskilled writer, her lack of understanding of Jan's dilemma appeared harmful, and her aggressive, negative approach heightened Jan's fear of evaluation. Jan did not view Ms. Brewster's criticism as constructive. Ms. Brewster describes herself as "perhaps the one teacher who did not see Jan as solid gold."

Why hadn't Jan's previous teachers told her about her writing problem? Ms. Brewster speculates that her teachers might have been reluctant because Jan was "such a lovely girl," popular, extremely conscientious and interested, and had a mother who was very involved in school functions. Another teacher also speculated about teacher attitude: "So many students aren't motivated. They just don't care. And when we have a student like Jan who is motivated, even though she was perhaps grade-motivated, we are so grateful."

English 12-Average surveys literature through the Western Literature text. Longer works studied include Canterbury Tales, Macbeth, and Crystal Cave. Styles of writing are explored through the study of the essay, sonnet, short story, novel and term paper. It is interesting that Jan earned an "A" the first semester in Ms. Brewster's English class, the highest grade she had received in English to date, and a "B" the second semester. Ms. Brewster explained that these grades were not based on writing but

> reflect other things—reading, literature...It was an overall survey course, basically. Review of grammar the first six weeks. She did fine on that. Five or six novels to be read outside class. Highly objective testing on that. Did marvelous on that. Did it all, did her reading. The research paper she really couldn't do too poorly on because it was so structured...any conscientious student could make a B, if not an A. Had my grade been exclusively on writing...

The fact that Jan earned a C in Mr. Wilson's Advanced Composition class indicated, in Ms. Brewster's mind, "a real deficiency."

Mr. Wilson, however, could not understand how Jan could earn an A in her first semester of senior English and have a "major problem" in writing. At first, he could not recall Jan's writing problems specifically (which surprised Ms. Brewster, who believed Jan's wordiness would have "driven him crazy"), but Jan's grade of C indicated to him that she would have "some difficulty with college writing." He explained that "she could have had problems with organization or support. Even though we tell them [students] a million times, they just write in generalizations. Her word choice, could have been poor...It's hard to break habits students have developed for twelve years." Jan did not interpret her C in Advanced Composition as a bad grade: "Mr. Wilson never gives A's, and he rarely gives B's," she explained.

While Ms. Brewster was eager to discuss Jan's attitude toward writing, Mr. Wilson was reluctant because he didn't believe he could provide any insights: "She didn't express any dominant attitude that I recall." He describes Jan as "more dutiful about her work than enthusiastic." While she did her assignments, Mr. Wilson never saw any "spark" in her writing. He did observe that Jan seemed more motivated to please others than to please herself. "Perhaps if Jan wrote to please herself..." he pondered.

Jan recalled her main problem in Advanced Composition--unnecessary words and organization. While Jan saw Mr. Wilson as critical of her writing, she also saw his criticism as constructive: "Somehow, I don't know, Advanced Composition helped me--I don't know how to explain it--but Mr. Wilson helped me through, you know, certain ways to write and everything." Sometimes he marked out her sentences--even wrote paragraphs--and once he read one of her essays to the class as an example of bad writing. Jan suddenly felt she was a "hopeless case." While she felt "really embarrassed" (although he did not mention her name), she promised herself to try an "get a better grade" next time. He read her next paper to the class as an example of good writing. This time she felt proud.

When Jan did school writing, she wrote for the teacher: "You have to know really what the teacher wants to know. I don't really write, you know, what I like to write." Whenever she needed help in Mr. Wilson's class, he would help her by crossing out a word and rewriting. "This would tell me how he writes," Jan explained, "So I kind of followed that and, you know, it helped me get a better grade." Jan seemed confused about the nature of writing. In the words of one consultant, "She senses that writing should have a purpose but holds the reductive notion that the purpose in many writing classes is to please the teacher-as-audience."

While Jan remembered feeling frustrated and disappointed, spending "all that time just for those red marks and getting all those words crossed out," "beating her brains just trying to get a good paper out," she described Mr. Wilson as a "good teacher": "I learned a lot more from him than from other teachers...he helped me with my writing." Jan did not get enough help with her writing through her twelve years of schooling, however, to pass Old Dominion University's Writing Sample Placement Test.

When I showed her test to her Advanced Composition teacher, he noted her high error counts and presumed that she must have been very anxious about her writing. Surprisingly, Jan said she "felt real confident" going into the test. She believed she would write competently since she had just taken Advanced Composition: "If I just do everything Mr. Wilson taught me..."

In reality, Jan did not take time to plan or edit; she had no strategies for writing a 500-word essay under pressure. Instead, she wrote for the full ninety minutes, producing far more words than the 500-word requirement: "I guess I just wrote...A lot of it was probably unnecessary words, you know, repeats." When she learned she was placed in basic writing rather than in freshman composition, Jan felt disappointed but rationalized that many other students from Ms. Brewster's English classes were placed in Basic Writing too: "It could be telling us something? Maybe we got the wrong teacher." Jan was confused. What had gone wrong?

Ms. Brewster's treatment of Jan is no doubt one of the sources of Jan's negative attitude toward writing. "Probably Ms. Brewster," observed another consultant "is too abrupt, too concerned with institutional forms, too ready to pass off English as good writing and not concerned enough about what 'understanding' her students are struggling to create." It would be easy (and tempting) to attribute Jan's "event" with Ms. Brewster as the cause; however, it is hazardous to attribute too much casual significance to a single event.

Jan was a good student in traditional terms: she was conscientious, dutiful, cooperative, and earned good grades. In brief, she did well in everything she learned how to do but she never learned to write. One consultant described Jan as "caught in a bind ... She's a good student... She expects to do well academically...She's doing everything she knows how to do, and it is not working for her. She's told she doesn't know how to write, and she gets her words marked out, and then horrors, she's assigned to GN ST 050 (Basic Writing)." This consultant suspects the underlying cause of Jan's negative attitude toward writing is the feeling that she had been "betrayed by a system that she had been doing fairly well in." "Poor

teaching, or lack of teaching," the consultant concluded, "causes negative attitudes among students who expect to do well."

From her knowledge of Jan's teachers, the supervisor of secondary English instruction in Jan's school system concurred with this consultant's judgment: "Her teachers do not teach; they assign and examine, and their evaluations are summative, focusing on the past product, unconcerned with what revision and editing might effect. They do not handle writing as a process....A perceptive teacher should have concentrated Jan's attention on revision."

Jan is obviously what Kellogg Hunt (1965) would call a "fluent" writer, but in her senior year in high school, Jan's "flowery language," in the words of a consultant, "met head-on with the adult and sober expectations of teachers who...emphasize the classical virtues of style: correctness, appropriateness, dignity."

For eleven years, Jan thought she was an "average writer," that she could write competently. Had she deceived herself or had her teachers, the school system, deceived her? Although in an interview and in informal conversations, Jan could not articulate this sense of betrayal and, in the words of her English teachers' supervisor, "tried valiantly to be fair," a chief source of Jan's negative attitude toward writing seems to be this sense of betrayal rather than the more obvious negative feedback in the form of "red marks" and crossed-out words. An underlying cause of Jan's negative attitude toward writing and herself as a writer could stem from her teachers' confusion and lack of understanding of the nature of writing. Her teachers, a consultant observed, "seem to have no clear understanding of what they are teaching when they teach writing. They perceive it as a collection of discrete parts, not as a holistic process...Jan never does have a clear sense of what she is not doing; she had, instead, a rather fragmented perception of the flaws (wordiness, for example) in her writing...This ignorance results in reliance in fragmented criticism of students' written products" rather than attention to the process.

For eleven years, Jan had a generally positive attitude toward writing. Perhaps, one might reason, that positive attitude interfered with her learning to write because she thought--from the generally positive teache response and good grades--she had learned to write competently. She had been deceived, however, and, consequently, developed an unrealistic picture of herself as a writer, a picture which was shattered her senior year in high school. While most of Jan's teachers (exept for their "red marks") did not discourage her as a writer, they also did not teacher her the process of writing, especially revision, and important self-critical evaluation skills. Instead, they responded positively to Jan's being a good student as well as a pleasant person and so rewarded this fact, not her writing, with good grades.

BELIEFS

About self as writer

"I'm an average writer."*

About good writing

Good writing is "flowery."

About evaluation of writing

Critical evaluation of writing is the responsibility of the teacher.

The evaluation of writing is evaluation of the writer-person.

About the nature of writing

Writing involves directly transferring thoughts from the mind to the paper.

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*The quotation marks here and in subsequent cases indicate beliefs stated directly by the student.

Writing is a linear process.

Writing is learned from instruction.

Writing is outer-directed.

Belief about self as writer: "I'm an average writer."

Source

Jan believed she wrote as well as most other students--"not bad but not the best." She had earned good grades in "average" English classes (and one "above average" class) since junior high school. In high school English classes, she earned 5 B's, 1 C and 1 A. A grade of B to Jan seems to mean "average." While she earned a C in Advanced Composition, she considered this grade "average" because her teacher, reportedly, never gave A's and rarely gave B's. In all her twelve years of schooling, only one teacher--her senior English teacher--gave her reason to think she was a poor writer. Jan was able to discount this judgement, however, since earlier she had earned an A and a B from this teacher and, further, this teacher had a reputation, according to Jan, for "cutting people down." Thus, this "contradiction" failed to cause Jan to revise her belief.

Belief about good writing

Good writing is "flowery."

Source

This belief can be inferred from Ms. Brewster's description of Jan's writing:

> She was trying to be poetic and flowery and was never able to simply say something basic in a sentence.

Ms. Brewster believed Jan "got the fix somewhere in the past...that to be flowery, confusing, backwards, was the thing. To simply communicate was not the thing."

Jan recalled that one of her problems in Advanced Composition was "wordiness."

Beliefs about the evaluation of writing

Belief: Critical evaluation of writing is the responsibility of the teacher.

Source

From the data, Jan appears totally dependent as a writer on the teacher. She wrote and then turned her product in to be criticized ("red marks") by the teacher. Sometimes teachers (Ms. Brewster and Ms. Wheeler, for example) intervened in her writing process, switching "a phrase or a clause" or "cutting out whole sentences, even whole paragraphs." Jan appears to assume or trust that teachers know the way to write, and the "red marks" are meant to be helpful. Peer evaluation of writing and the development of self-critical skills does not appear to have been part of Jan's experience. Ms. Brewster said she tried peer reading but found students "just superficially criticized" writing. "They hadn't really been prepared," she explained, "to evaluate" writing (prior to their senior year)--"and considering all I was supposed to do..."

Belief: The evaluation of writing is the evaluation of the writer-person.

Source

According to Ms. Hull, Jan became discouraged when her writing was not evaluated positively (when she received numerous "red marks" and did not attain a high grade). Jan, however, was "really good friends" with Ms. Hull, and did not believe Ms. Hull disliked her because her writing wasn't "the best," but Jan did seem to judge herself harshly. According to Ms.

Brewster, Jan "just never liked to be criticized. When she was, she got on a high horse...I can just see her sitting in the classroom most disillusioned about herself...her lovely blue eyes would cloud over with tears because she could not handle the idea she was less than perfect." Jan was popular with both students and teachers. Ms. Brewster described herself as "perhaps the one teacher who did not see Jan [not Jan's writing] as solid gold."

Beliefs about the nature of writing

Belief: Writing involves directly transferring thoughts from the mind to the paper.

Source

In her twelve years of schooling, there is no evidence Jan learned to use writing as a way of making meaning. She waits for the "knowledge to come out" and gets frustrated when "it gets stuck up there." She can't write what she actually means; she can't break through the "mental barrier between thoughts in her head and...thoughts on paper." Jan does not mention this frustration in relation to writing outside school (correspondence with her grandparents, for example) but in relation to teacher-assigned or school writing.

Source

From the data, we know that Ms. Brewster taught the writing of the research paper as a linear process. Explained Ms. Brewster:

> The paper was composed in stages, week by week. For two weeks, the students worked on developing thesis statements in class discussion and individual conferences. Then a preliminary outline was required the third week and so on, methodically, step-by-step through most of the semester...The research paper she really couldn't do too poorly on because it was so structured...any conscientious student could make a B, if not an A.

Jan's notion of revision appeared to mean proofreading and thus was limited to crossing out words and paragraphs (as Ms. Brewster and Mr. Wilson, her teachers, did) or filling in blanks rather than reformulating ideas.

Belief: Writing islearned from instruction.

Source

Jan believed she would write competently on the Writing Sample Placement Test because she had just taken Advanced Composition and earned what she considered an average grade (C): "If I just do everything Mr. Wilson taught me..." she reasoned.

Through the years, Jan's English teachers seemed to have encouraged her dependency as a writer. She depended, it appears, on instruction, on learning the way to write from the teacher. She never learned that there are many ways to write, and she never learned her way or ways.

Source

In school, Jan wrote exclusively for the teacher. She explained, "You have to know really what the teacher wants to know. I don't really write, you know, what I like to write." She might have reasoned: School writing is something you have to do to please the teacher to earn a good grade. In order to do so, you have to figure out what the teacher wants. You can't write what you want to write. You have to write what the teacher wants the way the teacher wants. Jan learned what the teacher wanted by checking her writing with the teacher and observing which of her words the teacher crossed out and the teacher's rewriting. "It helped me get a better grade," she explained, and good grades were important to Jan who was trying to be a good student. Mr. Wilson, one of the teachers who, according to Jan, crossed out Jan's words and rewrote for her, described Jan as "more dutiful about her work than enthusiastic." He never saw any "spark" in her writing and observed that she seemed more motivated to please others than to please herself.

Tom's Case

Big Bay High School was built twelve years ago because as the rural community of Bayville expanded, the older Little Bay High School was becoming overcrowded. The total student population at Big Bay High School is 1,410. Approximately fifty-four percent of the graduates go on to four-year colleges, and an additional fourteen percent to two-year postsecondary institutions. Tom graduated in the top six percent of his class (27th out of 414) with a 3.4 grade point average and a verbal SAT score of 420.

At Big Bay High School, Tom was a member of the varsity wrestling team. With pride, he admitted, "At the end, I was pretty good." His greatest pride, however, was his involvement with the school's marching band. He was the drum major, a position which required " a lot of time." The band competed in many contests, involving numerous trips. Tom was also involved in the school's theatrical productions, working behind the scenes constructing sets. He enjoyed this activity because his friends were involved as well. He pointed out that he was popular and had many male and female friends. He believed, however, that his social activities distracted him from his school work.

In Tom's words, "Writing's not terrible but, you know, it's just not that exciting." At one time, however, a friend of Tom's suggested he try making a career as a writer because of his wild imagination. Tom wrote:

> If it were possible for me to place my thoughts and daydreams on paper as they came out of my brain, I could probably sell millions of paper back booklets. All of my writing would be of science fictions. I would write about future happenings, travelers of the planets. My writings would probably look like so; Enn, boom, We must be in another galaxy. I would create many sound affects in my writing. I love to make animal noises in public. My imagination would look great in writing, but I shouldn't write it.

In an interview, Tom explained, "If I wrote something down, I'd probably take it to somebody and then they'd have to correct it so much..." If Tom were to write, he would "hate to write books":

> I'd love to write film scripts, movie scripts, so I could see my writing...rather than just write something out and have it sit there...It's like you're building something, say a mechanical engine. You don't want to build it to sit in a museum to watch. I'd like to build it to see it do stuff and to have other people admire it and see it...but for people just to read..."

When Tom said the word "read" in the interview, he strayed from my question and discussed his associations with "read"--"Read. I don't know, I just never liked to read. I've always hated to read. And that's why I read slow, because I never read"—and then returned to the question. Tom strayed frequently throughout the interview, following his associations. For example, he went talking from drawing space figures to talking about his and his best friend's fantasy world to talking about dreams he had "years and years ago" to carrying on a lengthy discussion of one of his dream/fantasies. At another point in the interview when asked about whether or not he wrote letters, Tom answered the question with, "I used to write letters a lot." The corollary "I don't write letters now" triggered Tom to analyze his life in relation to his peers. He revealed his general insecurity in a lengthy digression about growing up--"It seems like everybody is growing up around me. I'm still hanging around.." "During the interview," observed one consultant, "he does not seem to do much connecting of ideas at all, and when he does, the connections are purely associative and mostly sensory-based, rather than abstract or intellectual." When asked about his writing process, Tom wrote, "I usually just sit down and start writing." In both the interviews and his school writing, Tom's cognitive style is similar--relatively unstructured and associative.

Tom admitted he "doesn't write really well." "I love what I can think," explained Tom, "My problem is I...think things, and I can't seem to

get exactly what I'm thinking on the paper, and if I can't get it down exactly the way I want it--just perfect--I don't like it. I don't even like reading it." Tom considered himself a "fair" writer and does not believe he writes as well as most other people.

Tom, however, "would like to enjoy writing." He speculated that the reason he dislikes writing is because he's "not too well at it right now" and is "too unsure" of himself. "His negative attitude toward writing," observed a consultant, "may very well be due to a realistic awareness that he does not have the skills required for college writing." While Tom admitted he "usually doesn't get the urge to sit down and write," he does see writing as a means of learning: "You always learn something when you write," and he added with a smile--"Like someone said, 'If you don't learn something new every day, it's a wasted day.'"

Tom recollected writing numerous reports in school, especially for history. In fifth grade, he wrote about a little country previously unknown to him, and in seventh grade, he "built a model of the Monitor and wrote about its battle with the Merrimack." As a high school senior, he did "quite a bit of report writing" for his government class.

When Tom entered high school, he took a mini (nine-week) English course "Improving the Paragraph" with Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones claims his concept of teaching writing, compared ot that of many other teachers, is "different." He believes a student "has something to say...I can't just let him [a student] feel 'I can't write and never could write.' I say, "Oh yes, you can, and that's why you're in here, so I can help you kind out you can write." He also "focuses completely on writing." Mr. Jones finds it "impossible to teach anything, punctuation for example, completely separately because it's one thing in the end."

Mr. Jones has his students write two compositions a week, one to be turned in to him and another to be read in class and then turned in later. He suggests topics but allows students to invent their own. After listening to a paper, he makes some positive comments and there is some class discussion. Tom, Mr. Jones recalled, loved delivering his papers behind a podium.

Mr. Jones, who sees writing as a process of revision, also has students share what they write with each other and check each other's papers. He wants "writing with a purpose--meaningful writing." While Mr. Jones sounds like an effective composition teacher, he appeared to have had little influence on Tom's development as a writer.

Tom vaguely recalled "Improving the Paragraph," and, at first, could not remember who taught the course. He thought perhaps the teacher was Mr. Jones. Tom recalled Mr. Jones outside rather than inside the classroom. Perhaps the course was too brief and Tom's involvement in school/social activities was more important at the time. Whatever the case, Mr. Jones certainly did not negatively affect Tom's attitude toward writing.

Also in his sophomore year, Tom took a nine-week course called "Punctuation Power" with Ms. Schuman. Ms. Schuman was "amazed" when she learned I wanted to interview her about Tom's negative attitude toward writing: "I never saw him negative about anything. He always took a positive approach to everything." While Ms. Schuman acknowledges the difficulty of teaching punctuation separate from composition, she feels the strength is that "it focuses their the students' attention." In composition courses, Ms. Schuman believes "both grammar and content should be examined." She described Tom as "an average student." Tom earned a C.

At the beginning of his junior year, Tom enrolled in British Literature I, a semester-long course. His teacher, Ms. Miller, described Tom as "very good natured, a very easy student to work with." A critical approach to literary selections was necessary to this course, an approach difficult for a student like Tom who "never liked to read." While Ms. Miller was probably referring to the reading of literary works, Tom also did not like reading his own work. Ms. Miller remembered that Tom's interpretations "lacked depth" and, therefore, Tom lacked confidence" "I recall he was the type of student who doubted himself...Tom would say, 'I just can't do that, Ms. Miller.'" While Ms. Miller thought Tom "a delightful person," she considered his work "average." She recalled Tom enjoying the lively class discussions "once we got into it." She also recalled he was "never a discipline problem" and "never unwilling to work." "He had such a positive attitude to work with," Ms. Miller explained, "that you could channel him into accomplishing."

Tom claims he learned most of what he knows about writing from his eleventh grade composition class (Composition 3) with Ms. Johnson. Tom said he "learned about index cards and everything." He does not know if he will ever use them—perhaps if he had "a really big important paper." He said he also learned about the three-point system (starting out with three basic points and supporting each one).

Ms. Johnson was surprised to learn Tom had not passed ODU's Writing Sample Placement Test. Tom was supposed to have taken Composition 2 before Composition 3 but could not fit it into his schedule. "The only thing I could fit in was Comp 3--so I said, '"Well, go for it, Tom.'" Ms. Johnson thought she was doing Tom a favor by giving him special permission to take Composition 3. She "thought he could manage" because she "had a very small class" and felt she "could probably work with him on an individual basis and put him through that particular course." Upon looking over his record and the results of ODU's Writing Sample Placement Test, she thought that "he probably should have taken Composition 2." Still, she was puzzled "because he did fairly well on his paper" (in Composition 3). In fact, Tom did very well, grade-wise, and earned an A- on his research paper entitled "Hemingway: The Religious and Heroic Symbolism of The Old Man and the Sea." "I really enjoyed writing that paper," recalled Tom.

Ms. Johnson believed Tom needed a usage course that was combined with composition. "That's one of the difficulties with this kind of scheduling," she explained. Ms. Johnson thinks that "you can do that [separate skills] as long as the teacher makes sure the students are taking this usage and transferring it to their writing." Rather than just drilling students with exercises in subject-verb agreement, for example, Ms. Johnson believes that teachers also ought to ask students to write paragraphs and edit for errors. "Hopefully," said Ms. Johnson, "you take the usage course and then take a composition course." Tom took a usage course in his senior year after Composition 3. Consequently, Ms. Johnson continued, "he couldn't take what he learned in there about subject-verb agreement or whatever the usage rule and apply it to his own writing." Ms. Johnson believes students need usage course because "if you said, 'All right, you've got problems with subject-verb agreement' and they haven't had the usage, they don't know what you're

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talking about... If you say you're not using the correct case of the pronoun, they've forgotten from elementary or junior high, when they take that grammar initially...You have to go back and refresh just so that you have some terminology in common."

Ms. Johnson described Tom as "enthusiastic about his subject" of his re-search paper. She remembered that both Tom and his girlfriend worked on Hemingway's book The Old Man and the Sea, though they chose different topics, and he would discuss his ideas with her. "He was just very conscientious," Ms. Johnson recalled, "about making sure that everything was correct." Since most of the time in Composition 3 was spent on researching and writing this one paper, Tom--who had sentence structure and usage problems--had time to correct errors.

Ms. Johnson could not imagine Tom having a negative attitude about writing. She did remember that in the beginning of the course he worried about whether or not he "could make it through the course." In an interview, Tom admitted being "scared to death" because he didn't know if he would be able to keep up with the writing in Ms. Johnson's course.

After reading a portion of the transcript of my interview with Tom which I presented to Ms. Johnson during our interview, she wondered "if he had a problem with explaining himself." She explained, "A lot of times, if a student has difficulty in conversation, that carries over into the writing." Ms. Johnson believes "a lot of our students don't have formal enough situations speaking, that they learn to use the language." Tom had given me a copy of the research paper he had written for Ms. Johnson's course. During my interview with Ms. Johnson, she glanced at the comments she had written on the title page of Tom's research paper: "Your thesis is well supported. You still have a few areas where terminology is to [teacher's spelling] informal." "That's why he got the A-," she explained.

Ms. Johnson also wondered if the use of informal language could be attributed to a "maturity problem." "When I taught seventh grade," she explained, "I tried to show those students the same thing...You do your prewriting and brainstorming, and you get your ideas and you keep working with

those ideas until you've decided exactly what you want to write and then you support it, you know, with three points." Ms. Johnson noticed that in my interview with Tom, he kept "bringing up this idea of three points," but, she remarked, "he doesn't really know what he's talking about...It's not a concept he fully comprehends." In the interview, Tom tried to recall the three-point breakdown he did of The Old Man and the Sea but could only remember the "religious aspects." "I can't remember the two other ones," said Tom.

Ms. Johnson would rather have students for an academic year than just one semester "because you lose continuity when the system is structured so they jump from one teacher to another and from one subject to another." She added, "And those subjects aren't interrelated enough." "Gifted students," she explained, "are with the same teacher for the entire year."

Ms. Johnson informed me that her honor students were currently practicing writing under pressure, "and they do beautifully," said Ms. Johnson. She recalled, however, that the first time she had them write under pressure (45 minutes) one student outlined the whole time and never started writing while others just started writing immediately. Through practice, her students have learned to use their time efficiently and to complete the task. "They have really grown immensely," Ms. Johnson noted.

Ms. Johnson does not believe students get enough writing experience. She explained that because literature classes are large (usually 35 students), some teachers do not require essay responses on tests. "I just refuse," said Ms. Johnson who was teaching three literature courses at the time, "to let the time and the number of students get me bogged down so that I can't give that kind of a test." She recalled having juniors and seniors, however, who had never had the pressure of test writing.

Tom earned a B in Composition 3 but believes he should have earned an A because he "made an A" on an oral test and a B+ on his research paper. Actually, he earned an A- on the paper. But then Tom went on to say that Ms. Johnson "grades very very hard. They [the students] say the best grade they every heard of was someone made a B in her class. You know, B is about the best."

In his senior year, Tom took a course in grammar, which he describes as his "worst subject." "I've always never been able to do it, so I took the class." According to Tom, the course consisted of grammar exercises divorced from writing. The teacher, due to relocation, was unavailable for an interview.

In the spring semester of his senior year, Tom took British Literature II with Ms. Schuman, whom he had worked with two years earlier in "Punctuation Power." Ms. Schuman explained that in this course, students write essay responses to questions and are often asked to relate the literature to their own lives. She recalled that while Tom's "mechanics were not strong" ane he was "not very perceptive," he was "always willing." Tom remembers "the essay questions were hard" but he "enjoyed this class" and believed Ms. Schuman to be "a good teacher." Tom earned a C, "probably," he speculated, "because I just don't write well on the spur of the moment." Ms. Schuman believes that if Tom had more writing courses, he would have continued developing as a writer because of his generally positive attitude.

When asked to compare writing to another activity, Tom chose wrestling. He sees both as skills which can improve with practice. In an interview, he cited his father as an example of someone who is learning to write by writing:

> I look at my father, my father, you know, he didn't even finish high school, but right now he's very much into computers and he writes a lot and I've noticed in him, it seems the more he writes, the more he learns...and he's getting better at it [writing].

Tom is aware that he needs to practice writing in order to develop skills, but what kind of writing practice does Tom need?

Tom seems most comfortable with what Britton (1975) calls expressive writing or what Emig (1971) calls reflexive writing. He claims that when doing school writing he does not write for the teacher--"I write for me."

He also admitted, however, trying to write "for a more intellectual reader." He explained, "I try to make my paper sound better, you know--I like candy. I enjoy the taste of candy." Perhaps what Tom meant when he said, "I write for myself," is that he would like to write for himself or would like to put himself into his writing.

Tom had difficulty reshaping his expressive writing for a school audience--even, and maybe especially, an implied one. He did not know how to invest himself in school writing tasks. Summarized one consultant:

> From his writing experience, he remembers the three-point system, index cards and reports--the copying of facts. Tom knows that writing should have meaning, should be vivid; however, his experience has shown that writing means "doing" assignments--working within rigid boundaries--fitting half-conceived ideans into formulas--school writing. Tom has learned to become overly concerned about the externals--the "format" of sentences, for instance.

Early in the basic writing class, I observed Tom editing for correctness and language that sounded "more intellectual" as he was composing, which actually prevented him from composing (in the sense of making meaning) at all. Tom, at that point, certainly was not writing for himself. The test he was producing was not his but, instead, represented his idea of the kind of text a student should produce for school writing. It is not that Tom wanted to approach writing this way but he knew no other way; Tom never learned strategies for exploring ideas, for making meaning. He was working on translating his ideas for the reader--with special attention to correctness and sound--before he had come to understand what he wanted to say.

Tom did not know how to move from loosely (and associatively) organized expressive writing to hierarchically organized transactional (academic) writing. Observed a consultant, "Tom's conceptual habits, his cyclical rather than logically-sequential thinking, are not the kind that are easily

suited to creating linear written products."

If Tom were to write for himself, he would write fantasies to be read and enjoyed by others. "Fantasies," a consultant explained, "can be his own":

> What is interesting about Tom is that his experience with writing is at odds with what he intuits about writing. Tom wants to see his writing in action. He wants to see his imagination in words. However, when he writes, the words just sit there.

Tom does not read but is captivated by the visual media (science-fiction movies in particular) and, concluded this consultant, "Tom may be judging writing in terms of how nearly it approximates visual fiction" (Star Wars, for example).

Tom was "scared to death" when he went to take ODU's Writing Sample Placement Test. He said, "Oh my gosh--what's it going to be like? I have no idea. I gotta write this many words in this length of time: and his friend said, "Oh yeah, Tom, it's gonna be hard."

In high school, Tom did not work hard at his writing. As one consultant put it, "Perhaps he tried to make up for some hard writing effort with an extra dash of charm." However, if writing (composing) had been stressed throughout Tom's English (and school) curriculum, Tom--given his positive outlook--would undoubtedly have made more of an effort.

BELIEFS

About self as writer

"I'm a fair writer."

About the nature of writing

Writing involves directly transferring thoughts from the mind to the paper.

Writing is a way of learning.

Writing should be right the first time.

Writing is a linear process.

Writing is learned from formal instruction in grammar.

You learn to write by writing.

Writing is outer-directed.

Belief about self as writer

"I'm a fair writer."

Source

On the basis of teacher evaluation of his writing and Tom's self-evaluation, Tom concluded he's a "fair writer": "I do not write as well as most other people. I do not have the skill." Ms. Schuman and Ms. Miller considered Tom's work "average." He earned 4 C's and 2 B's in English courses. His 2 B's were in "Improving the Paragraph" with Mr. Jones and in Composition 3 with Ms. Johnson. While he earned an A- on his research paper, he received considerable help from Ms. Johnson, especially in making corrections, over the semester.

Beliefs about the nature of writing

Belief: Writing involves directly transferring thoughts from the mind to the paper.

Source

This belief is inferred from direct statements made by Tom: "If it were possible for me to place my thoughts and daydreams on paper as they came out of my brain...I love what I can think...My problem is I...think things, and I can't seem to get exactly what I'm thinking on the paper." Thus, Tom concludes, "My imagination would look great in writing, but I shouldn't write it." The implication here is that skilled writers are able to transfer their thoughts directly from minds to the paper. In his years of schooling, Tom was apparently not exposed to writers at work. He tried to write but didn't know the way, which he assumed most other people knew. His belief was never challenged.

Belief: Writing is a way of learning.

Source

While Tom believes writing involves directly transferring thoughts from the mind to the paper, he also believes "you always learn something when you write." Tom recollected writing "numerous reports" in school, especially for history. In fifth grade, he recalled acquiring information (factual knowledge) while writing reports (in the fifth grade about a country and in seventh grade, about the battle of the Monitor and the Merimack).

Belief: Writing should be right the first time.

Source

"And if I can't get it down exactly the way I want it--just perfect--I don't like it. I don't even like reading it." Early in the BW class, I observed Tom trying to write a perfect first draft, editing for spelling and the use of words he thought might be more appropriate "for a more intellectual reader." He had great difficulty writing "right" the first time and stopped often to stare at the page or erase. Nervously, he tap-tap-tapped his pencil on his desk, as if waiting for a muse to transfer his thoughts from the mind to the paper. He evidently had not written multiple drafts

before, except perhaps for a research paper written over a period of a semester. Tom does not seem to understand revising as re-seeing but as taking time to correct errors. According to Ms. Johnson, "He was just very conscientious about making sure that everything was correct." This association of writing with correctness undoubtedly came from his experiences with writing in school, including his experience writing in Ms. Johnson's research paper-writing class.

Belief: Writing is a linear process.

Source

Left alone, Tom's writing process consisted of "just sitting down and writing." With a teacher's intervention, however, Tom took a whole semester to write one research paper. Tom claims to have learned most of what he knows about writing from his eleventh grade composition (research paper) teacher Ms. Johnson. "I learned about index cards and..the three-point system" (starting out with three basic points and supporting each one). The emphasis in this course appeared to be on form which was arrived at step-by-step. Ms. Johnson explained that when she taught seventh grade, she

> tried to show...students the same thing: you do your pre-writing and brainstorming, and you get your ideas and you keep working with those ideas until you've decided exactly what you want to write and then you support it, you know, with three points.

In an interview, Tom recalled the "three-point" breakdown but he could not recall his three points--what he had to say. It seems that he learned to be concerned, instead, about the external "format" of school writing.

Belief: Writing is learned from formal instruction in grammar.

Source

While there is no indication that Tom strongly held this belief, it is likely that he inferred this belief from some of his English teachers' attitudes toward the relationship of grammar and writing. Ms. Johnson, for example, believes students can apply formal instruction in grammar to their writing. She also believes that students need formal instruction in grammar so that they can understand grammatical errors when pointed out by an English teacher. She believed Tom should have taken a grammar course before Composition 3 "so he could take what he learned in there...and apply it to his own writing." Tom enrolled in a grammar course in his senior year.

Belief: You learn to write by writing.

Source

Tom seems to have partially inferred this belief from observing his father get "better at writing" by writing more and more on his job: "It seems the more he writes, the more he learns...and he's getting better..." Tom also believes he learned to wrestle by wrestling, by practicing over and over—and thinks the same must be true for writing. Tom's writing experience was very limited in high school: he did not learn to write by writing. He is an unpracticed writer.

Ms. Schuman believes Tom—because of his generally positie attitude—would have continued developing as a writer if he had taken more "writing courses."

Even Ms. Johnson appears to believe "you learn to write by writing," judging from her statement that "students do not get enough writing experience." Ironically, she reduced Tom's writing practice by allowing him to bypass Composition 2 and go directly to Composition 3. Tom is likeable, and she probably wanted to help him through the system. He got through the system but he did not learn to write better.

Belief: Writing is outer-directed.

Source

While Tom "would like to enjoy writing," he does not enjoy school writing because he's "not too well at it." His writing has to be "corrected so much." When Tom writes for school, he pays attention to surface correctness and form while he is still discovering what he wants to say. At the same time, he also edits-as-he-writes for what he calls "a more intellectual reader." Years of teacher attention to correctness and form rather than to writing as a way of making meaning undoubtedly gave rise to this belief. Tom did not begin with more expressive writing and move outward to more public writing. Instead, he usually "just wrote" for "a more intellectual reader" the first and final draft. He was not taught to invest himself in school writing.

Charlene's Case

Little Bay High School, the school Charlene graduated from, is one of five high schools in the growing rural community of Bayville. The total student population is 1,334 students. Thirty-six percent of Little Bay High's graduates go on to four-year colleges and nineteen percent go to two-year colleges.

According to Assistant Principal Ms. Mahoney, many families choose to settle in Bayville because of its stability: "People come here and they stay. Sometimes people go away but they usually return." Ms. Mahoney went away for a few years but returned when Charlene was in her junior year.

Ms. Mahoney did not remember Charlene Johnson but remembered her brothers. In fact, they periodically stop by her home to update her on their lives. Nevertheless, she had to stop and think who Charlene was. Then she remembered Charlene as a little girl standing in front of the Johnson home, "a modest but convenient house in an open area where there are not many other houses."

"Charlene comes from a hard-working background," Ms. Mahoney explained. "Getting an education was important to Charlene's parents," neither of whom attended high school. Charlene's mother is a housewife, and her father is an inspector at an automobile plant.

Charlene is the youngest of six children, one of whom is a foster child. Her oldest brother died in an automobile accident when Charlene was five years old. He was in his first year of college and was studying to be a preacher and history teacher. Rob, the next oldest brother, holds both Bachelor and Master of Science degrees and has also completed some doctoral study. Another brother, a computer programmer, is working toward a college degree. Charlene's older sister, who owns an antique shop, is "the only one in the family who didn't finish high school," said Charlene. Her other sister is an LPN at Bayville General Hospital, and her foster brother is in the Navy. Charlene describes her family as "very close" and "religious."

Charlene did not participate in sports or school activities. She says, "I was a loner. I went to school, did my work and came home. I didn't go to football games on Friday night. I didn't have friends to go with." Ms. Mahoney recalled that Charlene "did not seem to care about her appearance" and did not dress like her peers. Charlene points out with pride, however, that she was a member of the National Honor Society.

Two of Charlene's brothers, as well as her mother, had speech problems, including stuttering. Ms. Mahoney particularly remembered Charlene's brother Rob, for he was unusually persistent, determined and highly motivated, as well as intelligent. He taught himself calculus and was gifted in the computer sciences. She remembered not understanding a point he made in a calculus class which she taught. Because of his speech problem, Ms. Mahoney did not want to embarrass him, but he stopped her: "I know you did not understand what I said, and I want you to hear what I have to say." Slowly, he repeated his point until it was understood. "And it was a good point," Ms. Mahoney recalled. The other students were patient with him and liked him.

In an interview, Charlene talked about her brother. "He worked in the Pentagon now," she pointed out with pride. He graduated from high school at the top of his class: "He was like 9 out of 250." Charlene is quick to compare herself: "When I graduated, I was 23 out of 535 students." (Actually, she ranked 17 out of 502 students with a grade point average of 3.6 and a verbal SAT score of 450).

Prior to high school, Charlene earned mostly A's and B's. Report writing dominated her early experiences with writing. She recalled a positive experience with creative writing in the sixth grade. The teacher "had these little pictures...and...we'd...write up a little story of what we...wanted to write." This writing was "for extra credit...not for a grade," Charlene explained. She enjoyed this kind of writing, writing that belonged to her rather than to a teacher, and she wrote quite a few stories; other school writing Charlene did "because it had to be done."

After sixth grade, Charlene disliked writing because she believed that her teachers, judging from their negative criticism, disliked her writing. Since Charlene viewed writing--however public--as an extension of herself, this led her to believe her teachers disliked her. I've always needed people to like what I do, or to like me." Before high school, Charlene was already writing to try to please teachers and earn grades rather than writing to please herself and to learn. Yet she wanted to learn to write better, if for no other reason than to earn good grades, indicators of approval and acceptance. Perhaps she could improve her writing significantly in high school.

When Charlene entered high school, she set two goals: (1) to make straight A's at least one marking period and (2) to make the National Honor Society--something her brother Rob doubted she could do. "I always had to prove myself," she explained. Charlene also entered high school with a weak background in writing. Given her goals, she viewed composition courses as obstacles to be avoided when possible. She felt more comfortable with courses (grammar and mathematics, for example) that followed a systematic and sequential process that was defined in advance by a teacher.

In her sophomore year, Charlene enrolled in a grammar course with Ms. Ayers. Grammar in this school system, as in many others, is taught as an isolated skill. Ms. Ayers gives her students "grammatical structures." If they make errors, spelling for example, their grades are lowered. Ms. Ayers claimed that if students are not penalized by grade for errors, then they do not care. She remembered Charlene "always being a good student, always prepared." Charlene earned an A. "I know grammar," explained Charlene. "I just don't know how to put the grammar and my ideas together to form a... composition."

In "Organizing the Essay," a course Charlene also took in her sophomore year, she tried hard to develop as a writer, but she was frustrated from the start. Intuitively, Charlene knew her texts did not represent what she wanted to say. Anxiously, she submitted them to be judged by Ms. Padgett, her composition teacher, and repeatedly Ms. Padgett reinforced, with C grades and negative criticism, what one consultant referred to as Charlene's "evolving sense of scribal insecurity." Observed another consultant, "Charlene's poor writing performance does not meet her expectations; yet, she is unable to do better because she does not know how."

Charlene recalls Ms. Padgett telling her composition class that this was not a creative writing class. Ms. Padgett also told her students they "shouldn't expect more than a C, that a C was a good grade," but Charlene knew better. Ms. Padgett wondered "if Charlene didn't feel she should get better grades than she got...I couldn't get her to understand that she was a C student." Actually, judging from total school performance, Charlene was an A/B student. Ms. Padgett, observed another consultant, "transferred writing performance to person"; she perceived Charlene as a "dull person, an uninteresting dull person."

Charlene tried to rise above the C expected of her and to win Ms. Padgett's approval. She reviewed Ms. Padgett's list of errors to avoid and listened to her warning:

> If you get the three to's (two, too) mixed up; if you get the two there's (their) mixed up--what I call my illiterates; if you make a grammatical error--such as subject-verb agreement or using a pronoun that absolutely has no antecedent--these bring your paper down to an average paper.

When Charlene wrote and was unsure of the spelling of a word, she would use another word she knew how to spell. She worried about having so many pages or paragraphs. She believed she could talk better than she could write: "When it comes to expressing my ideas on paper...I don't have enough." Perhaps Charlene was afraid to elaborate, to experiment, to risk, for fear of error. When she received her C papers back with numerous notes and corrections, she asked Ms. Padgett's help in understanding the corrections. "She's the kind of student," Ms. Padgett explained, "that worries you to death as far as making the corrections."

Ms. Padgett recalled that sometimes Charlene would get angry with her, and she would just tell her, "All right, you little smart ass, you just sit down, and we'll get this thing after school. Before school, we do not have time." Ms. Padgett became impatient with Charlene's questioning. In terms of improving her writing, Charlene probably asked insignificant questions but she had never learned (been taught) to raise significant questions, questions that would help improve her writing. Frustration mounted for both student and teacher. "I wasn't trying to change her style," Ms. Padgett explained. "Formal writing was required." ("One problem with [school] writing," noted Charlene, "is you have to write in [school] English.") "I was merely trying," Ms. Padgett continued "to help her see picky things like--We do not begin every sentence in a paragraph with the same structure. We must vary the structure." External constraints--length, for example, and too much attention to surface errors rather than meaning--seem to have prevented Charlene from internalizing the process of writing.

Ms. Padgett tried to make Charlene see that "process does make a difference." However, perhaps because Ms. Padgett graded the beginning of the

process, the chief difference Charlene observed was the difference in grade between process and product. Charlene received A's on the jottings and outlines Ms. Padgett required her students to submit, but she always received C's on her papers. What happened between Charlene's A's (jottings and outlines) and C's (products)?

There is no indication that Ms. Padgett and Charlene ever had a conference about her writing process; instead, they apparently battled over corrections. Ms. Padgett knew that Charlene's correcting her themes over and over would not lead to better products but she "could not get her to understand." Charlene learned what not to do (surface errors to avoid) but not what to do (strategies for composing). Their relationship, in the words of a consultant, was "adversarial rather than collaborative." There is also no indication that Charlene observed writers (her peers, her teachers, professionals) composing or that much class time was used for composing.

Charlene did not understand writing as a non-linear process. The A's she received in mathematics and grammar indicate that she could handle linear, teacher-and rule-directed processes. In composing, however, she needed help, but Ms. Padgett concentrated on mechanics of expression and conventions governing correct usage and so Charlene did not learn to write competently, which meant Ms. Padgett "didn't see much improvement in Charlene's writing." For those students who knew how to make meaning but who needed help with editing for correctness, Ms. Padgett's pickiness seemed helpful. But for students like Charlene who needed to learn strategies for exploring ideas rather than mechanically editing undeveloped ideas, Ms. Padgett's pickiness seemed a hindrance.

Although Charlene remembers the C's, she actually earned a "B" in "Organizing the Essay." She's highly motivated...Charlene wants to work," Ms. Padgett explained. "She pushed through...Charlene is a demanding question-asking child. Probably in order to get rid of her in elementary school, they gave her grades she didn't earn".

Several times during my interview with Ms. Padgett, she referred to Charlene's home background. Early she asked, "Do you know anything about her family?" Regarding her minor difficulty with spelling, Ms. Padgett remarked, "And her background, again, does show through." Later when I mentioned the academic success of some former Little Bay High School students in college, her reaction was that they were successful "despite the system." "Usually," Ms. Padgett explained, "they come from a home environment that has given them something...When they come into our classes, if we mention or give the least little spark, they pick it up and carry it on." Yet, later in the interview, Ms. Padgett momentarily assumed some of the responsibility: "It could be I do not understand Charlene or Charlene's kind."

On the surface, Charlene's negative attitude toward writing seems, in part, to stem from her weak self-concept or self-image. Nevertheless, she would seem to be overreacting when she takes Ms. Padgett's criticism of her writing personally. In fact, Charlene's perceptions appear to be accurate. According to Ms. Padgett, Charlene was "dull," "uninteresting," "demanding," "a C student," "a little smart ass," and had parents who did not go beyond the eighth grade. Ms. Padgett "does not understand Charlene or Charlene's kind." Ms. Padgett added, "I know nothing about a world that is not exposed to educating." One consultant found this remark particularly significant and speculated about the meaning. Ms. Padgett "doesn't talk about a world which is not exposed to literature or philosophy or science or arts and letters, but, rather, "educating." I suppose she's talking about THE SYSTEM. What else is educating? Educating is being able to work within the system...Here we might have again the idealistic student who lacks proper cynicism, who cannot be part of a system...The system is set up for students who are not only cynical but who can express themselves easily in words."

In her junior year, Charlene avoided taking a composition course because the C's she received in her sophomore composition class were "bad enough." Her junior year was also the time she came closest to achieving her goal of straight A's (she earned 5 A's and 1 B). "That's the year I didn't take a unit of composition," Charlene noted. That was also the year her school system switched from nine-week mini-courses to semester-long courses. In the transition, Charlene slipped through the system; no one noticed when Charlene elected to take another grammar course, which techni-

cally she was not supposed to do."

Charlene's grammar teacher turned out to be Ms. Padgett. From Charlene's perspective, Ms. Padgett's attitude toward her in the class was markedly different; she seemed to like (and approve of) Charlene in this class. This apparent change in teacher behavior confused Charlene:

> When I was in her composition class, she always used to criticize me, and she'd see me in the hallways, and I'd say 'hi' to her and she wouldn't speak. But then when I had her for grammar, I had straight A's without...effort, and then when I'd see her in the hallways, she'd say 'hi' back or ask me how I was doing.

Charlene even began stopping by Ms. Padgett's room every couple of weeks to visit with her. Charlene sought an explanation for the change: "I'm not sure she liked sophomores..She always liked good students, and...I wasn't good in composition." Ms. Padgett could understand Charlene's confusion "because right in the middle of class I said I don't approve of sophomores, juniors and seniors being together in high school because this brings every one of my classes down to the sophomore level." She would constantly have to stop and say, "All right, my darling sophomores, we must learn this."

In her junior year, Charlene also took a course in American literature. A different picture emerges of Charlene described by this teacher as "always an interested student":

> She took both reading and writing assignments seriously and gave them her full attention. She seemed to value any learning experience for the personal insights it gave her, and she sought out such insights. Her class discussions and personal conversations with me always showed a young lady of thought, and I felt her searchings and findings were reflected in her writings. She was a very open and willing student.

Charlene--a young lady of thought who seemed to value any learning experience. Charlene earned an A in American Literature.

Her experience in British Literature, which she took as a senior, was quite different. Each year--for the twenty-one years Mr. Newton had been teaching this course--he reviews the format for answering the essay questions and asks the students if they understand. They never ask any questions and yet, judging from the weak essay responses, the students should have had questions. The year Charlene was enrolled in this course, Mr. Newton decided to try something different. He assumed there were questions but the students weren't asking them, so he passed out a guide which included his own written response to his own essay question. He took "an entire class period" to go over the guide, and still there was no improvement in their essay responses. Mr. Newton does not believe he should have to teach composition in British Literature. By the time they come to his class, they should already know how to write. Mr. Newton explained that he is often called into the office to meet with parents, angry over the grades their children, in his opinion, earned.

Charlene, according to her standards, did not do well; she earned a C. Ms. Padgett warned Charlene that she would have to "regurgitate..to get an "A" in Mr. Newton's class. Considering her grade-consciousness, however, she probably would have done whatever was required (regurgitation of a teacher's ideas, for example) to earn a good grade. If she had been fluent verbally, given her motivation, she probably would have earned an A in British Literature. Mr. Newton had difficulty recalling her: "Charlene doesn't stand out. Let's see. She wasn't an attractive girl as I recall... I vaguely remember."

In her senior year, Charlene could no longer avoid composition. Composition 3, however, turned out not to be a composition course at all but more practice in, as one consultant put it, "another institutional form," the research paper--just the opposite of what Charlene needed for her development as a writer. In Composition 3, Charlene did not do much writing. The course, Ms. Thompson explained, "was more how to do research...footnotes and bibliography and outlining." Just so Ms. Thompson "could see how they

write" and that they could develop a thesis, she asked her students to choose an author, come up with a thesis statement...read either biography or autobiography and...books by the author...critical reviews...and write a paper based on the thesis statement." Ms. Thompson, according to her account, has students formulating thesis statements before they explore ideas. Perhaps she allowed reformulation after reading. Charlene did not learn "the generation and uses of chaos" (Berthoff, 1981) but rather how to get a thesis statement.

Ms. Thompson recalls that Charlene had difficulty choosing an author and "finally came up wtih Carson McCullers." During the first week of the course, Ms. Thompson gives the students a long list of American and British authors from which to choose. Many students, Ms. Thompson observed, "weren't familiar with three people on the list--which is really terrible. You would think by the time you're a senior you would have at least heard of Hawthorne."

Ms. Thompson describes Charlene's attitude toward writing as "pretty good": "She always asked me any time she had a question or problem." Ms. Thompson thought Charlene's thesis statement interesting because she believed Charlene could identify with loneliness: "This theme, which she Carson McCullers wrote many books about, deals with the ideas of loneliness and the seeking of links between lost human beings."

Ms. Thompson remembered that Charlene was "not real popular in terms of the whole student body." She wondered if the way Charlene felt about herself carried over to her attitude toward herself as writer. Charlene's negative attitude toward writing could be attributed to an internal factor--her weak self-concept. But to what extent was Charlene's self-concept, as a person and a writer, influenced by external factors--school curriculum and teachers?

In Composition 3, the students also write a few other papers "here and there." Charlene earned a "B," which, according to Ms. Thompson, "is really good in that class because that is a pretty hard course...It's more of an advanced composition course." It is interesting that Ms. Thompson views

"footnotes, bibliography and outlining" as advanced composition. Still, Charlene did not advance in composition; she continued to hold to her narrow conception of the composing process.

Noting that Charlene complained about writing on assigned topics, Ms. Thompson was reminded of what she perceives to be an English teacher's dilemma:

> Students don't want to write about what you want them to write about and then... if you say 'pick a topic,' they write about what they did over the summer and then that just perpetuates year after year and that's all they ever write about themselves.

Stated another way, while students do not like inappropriate assignments (ones that do not match their expectations and experience), they often do not know how to make appropriate assignments themselves. Perhaps they have not learned strategies for generating "topics."

Ms. Thompson described Charlene's tenth grade composition teacher Ms. Padgett as "excellent...a very hard composition teacher." "Good students," she added, "learn a lot from her...Their writing improves." If a good student is someone who earns good grades, then Charlene, who earned mostly A's and B's, qualifies. Or is a "good student" in a composition class someone who already knows how to write but needs to learn to be "picky" about surface errors? Ms. Thompson notices a "big difference" in the writing of those students who have had Ms. Padgett as a teacher. Ms. Thompson also recognizes, however, that the students who work with this kind of teacher have to be able to separate themselves from their writing and that "that's hard for a lot of people to do." Probably students with already strong self-concepts as writers--already "good students" of composition--can detach themselves from their writing. Charlene observed that Ms. Padgett "liked good students." That's how Charlene arrived at the conclusion "Ms. Padgett liked me when I had her for grammar but she didn't like me when I had her for composition." Charlene was a "good student" of grammar.

"To some extent," observed one consultant, "Charlene was a victim of the scheduling and course structure confusion which seems to characterize her progression through high school English classes." In high school, Charlene had little writing practice. Writing was not taught across the English curriculum and certainly not taught across the school curriculum. Instead, even after the switch from mini to semester courses, the English curriculum was compartmentalized into grammar, literature, composition and the research paper (under the name of Composition 3). Charlene took two courses in grammar, one nine-week course in composition, one course in the research paper, and two courses in literature. In one literature course, she seemed to develop thinking/writing skills, but in the other course her teacher believed she should already know how to write, that composition should not be taught in literature. With her limited background in writing, Charlene had difficulty composing essays in this literature class as a senior.

Charlene's brief experience in composition was negative. Charlene did not learn composing (putting together) but, rather, de-composing (taking apart), or what Ann Berthoff (1981) calls anticomposing. Her teacher's approach was product-centered, with the teacher judging the finished products. Charlene must have had good ideas and plans to receive A's on her jottings and outlines--but no strategies, judging from the C's on her products, for realizing her texts. Her revisions undoubtedly consisted of correcting teacher-marked surface errors. Agonizing over the "ideal text," or the text the teacher has in mind, caused Charlene to become so anxious about writing that she would "wait for the last minute" to begin. "The delay that goes with the dreaded task," points out a consultant, "is her biggest handicap. She leaves no time for reformulation and rewriting."

Ironically, Charlene's best writing teacher was her boyfriend. When he left for military duty, he asked Charlene to write to him. She became very anxious. He was a good writer ("real good English") and liked to write. She had observed him composing (he was probably the only person she observed composing); compared to her, he wrote with ease. She was certain he didn't make "illiterate" errors. Since he would be away for over a month, she would have to write to him. She imagined him receiving her first letter:

"He would sit down and go through it and find every error...and then say something to me about it when he got back." Hesitantly, she sent the first letter out, "but he didn't do that;" he didn't read for error but for meaning. She also found "he was writing less formally," and he even used one of the "illiterate" words she remembered from her sophomore composition class, a word that would bring a paper down to a C. "I just got more comfortable as I went on writing him." Eventually, she even sent him poetry she had written during breaks from her part-time work at Burger Chef. She could trust her boyfriend with her writing; he was not a judge/adversary. Unlike most artifical school writing, writing had become purposeful conversation/communication.

Charlene failed Old Dominion University's Writing Sample Placement Test and was placed in General Studies 050--Basic Writing. From the moment Charlene learned she would have to take this test, she "dreaded it." She would be asked to write an essay that depended upon general educational background. Charlene thought to herself: "I can't do any research. They're going to tell me a subject I don't know anything about and I'm going to be stuck...I was scared." Although Charlene ranked in the top 42% of her graduating class, she assumed she was not knowledgeable. Actually, she had no strategies for tapping her knowledge.

When Charlene took the test, she had a choice of writing on one of two questions. She looked at the questions and said, "I don't know anything about either topic," assuming because she had "never thought about" a question before that she could not write about it now. She did not understand one question--Should reporters be required to divulge news sources? She said she didn't know anything about "whether newspaper editors should indulge a source." She thought about the other question--Should more educational shows be presented on commerical television?--and formed an opinion but "couldn't find enough stuff to write 'cause it said it had to be 400 or 500 words...and I just couldn't think of stuff to write." When she left the test, she didn't care--"I just knew it was over with." She told herself, "I can't do nothing about it now. I'm either going to make it or not." However, Charlene got "sicker as the day went along." "She thought about passing, not writing," observed one consultant.

What emerges in this case is what a consultant termed "a basic pattern of writing socialization." If students are fortunate enough to fit into the system, then they probably can survive school as writers. Otherwise, students need strong egos to "withstand the onslaught." In the school system's fragmented English curriculum, Charlene could avoid writing, and perhaps learning, yet still achieve academic excellence. While academically successful, she was not successful as a writer. As one consultant put it, "She did not do well in her writing, nor did she learn how to do better in her writing. Naturally enough, she disliked writing." Another consultant elaborated: "Charlene has failed to appropriate texts and the writing act itself for herself. Clearly, Charlene has found no way to succeed in school writing because school writing was owned by the teachers, not by Charlene." Charlene sums up her case against the school system: "In high school, my teachers would say you could do this or that to improve but they never really told you how you could."

BELIEFS

About self as writer

"I can't write."

About good writers

Good writers write with ease.

Good writers do not make errors.

Good writers are "real good" in English.

Good writers know the way to write.

About evaluation of writing

The evaluation of writing is also the evaluation of the writer-person.

Critical evaluation of writing is the responsibility of the teacher.

About the nature of writing

"Writing is putting together grammar and ideas."

"A paper must be a certain length."

Writing ability should be acquired by a certain time/age.

Writing is a linear process.

Writing is outer-directed.

Belief about self as writer

"I can't write."

Source

Charlene's teachers and her boyfriend (a good writer) unconsciously led her to believe that there is a way to write known by teachers and good writers. Teacher response to her writing further led her to believe that she did not know the way to write. And thus she concluded, "I can't write." She was not led to believe otherwise.

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Beliefs about good writers

Good writers are "real good" in English.

Good writers write with ease.

Good writers do not make errors.

Good writers know the way to write.

Source

These beliefs about good writers Charlene seems to have inferred partially from observing her boyfriend's writing behavior. From the data, there is no evidence of Charlene having observed other good writers at work. She might have reasoned:

Good writers are "real good" in English.
My boyfriend was "real good" in English.
(I was not "real good" in English.)
Therefore, my boyfriend is a good writer.
(I am not a good writer.)

My boyfriend is a good writer.
He writes with ease.
He does not make errors.
He knows the way to write.

Good writers write with ease.
Good writers do not make errors.
Good writers know the way to write.

I do not write with ease.
I make errors.
I do not know the way to write.

Charlene may also have inferred these beliefs from her experience in various English classes. The belief that good writers do not make errors, for example, was probably formed from years of teacher attention (most notably, Ms. Padgett's) to surface errors.

Beliefs about the evaluation of writing

Belief: The evaluation of writing is also the evaluation of the writer-person.

Source

Charlene equated criticism of her writing with dislike: If you dislike my writing, then you dislike me. Although according to Charlene, her negative experiences with the evaluation of her writing date as far back as the seventh grade, she seems to perceive her tenth grade teacher Ms. Padgett as her chief critic.

Charlene believed Ms. Padgett disliked her in composition class, which Charlene took as a sophomore. She knew Ms. Padgett did not like sophomores (in the same class as juniors) and that she liked good students, so two lines of reasoning were open to her:

Ms. Padgett dislikes sophomores.
I was a sophomore when I took compositon with Ms. Padgett.
Therefore, Ms. Padgett disliked me.

Ms. Padgett likes good students.
I was not a good student in Ms. Padgett's composition class.
(Evidence: Ms. Padgett criticized my writing, and I earned C's).
Therefore, Ms. Padgett disliked me.

And Charlene might well have concluded--If I knew the way to write, I would be a good student and Ms. Padgett would like me.

Charlene feared that her boyfriend would dislike her writing (in letters) and possibly think less of her as a person. She was surprised when he only paid attention to her meaning; yet, she did no revise her belief system. She merely compartmentalized the data from the episode. This intense belief, based on years of evidence, would be difficult to change. Perhaps also she believed a boyfriend could prove an exception.

What is interesting is that the following year--her junior year--Charlene believed Ms. Padgett liked her. She observed that in the hallways, Ms. Padgett even said "hi" to her. Naturally, Charlene became confused because Ms. Padgett's behavior and seemingly new attitude did not fit in with Charlene's existing beliefs.

Charlene appears to have made sense out of the confusion by modifying her old belief and adding a new belief that would fit in. She revised "Ms. Padgett dislikes me" to Ms. Padgett disliked me in composition class." Then she appears to have reasoned:

Ms. Padgett dislikes sophomores.
I am a junior.

Ms. Padgett likes good students.
I am a good student of grammar.
(Evidence: I earned A's in grammar.)
(I was not a good student of composition.)
Therefore, Ms. Padgett likes me in grammar class.

Charlene's caution is interesting. She doesn't take the leap to "Ms. Padgett likes me" or reconsider that Ms. Padgett, though she criticized her writing, might have liked her.

Belief: Critical evaluation of writing is the responsibility of the teacher.

Source

Charlene's teachers were the sole evaluators of her writing. Therefore, Charlene assumed evaluation of writing was the responsibility of the teacher. She never learned to critically evaluate her own writing.

Belief: "Writing is putting together grammar and ideas."

Source

Charlene probably arrived at this belief from an outside source, presumably one English teacher and reinforced by other English teachers. For example, Ms. Ayers, her tenth grade grammar teacher, believed students could improve their writing abilities by studying "grammatical structures" and then writing "incorporating those structures." From prior experience (earning A's in two grammar classes and a C in a composition class), Charlene is confident about her knowledge of grammar--"I know grammar"--but concludes that she "can't write" because she "doesn't know how to put the grammar and ideas together to form a...composition": she doesn't know the way to write.

Belief: "A paper must be a certain length."

Source

Charlene probably formed this belief on the basis of her experience producing "papers" for school. She believed she could talk better than she could write. "When it comes to expressing my ideas on paper," Charlene explained, "I don't have enough..I can never think of enough stuff to write."

Belief: Writing ability should be acquired by a certain time/age.

Source

Mr. Newton believed that composition should not have to be taught in a senior literature class because students should already know how to write by their senior year. Charlene might have reasoned:

> Mr. Newton thinks I should know how (the way) to write by now.
> I should know how to write.
> Mr. Newton (judging from the C grade) thinks I can't write.

Belief: Writing is a linear process.

Source

It seems likely that Charlene inferred this belief from her experience with what she refers to as "school writing." From the data, we know that two of her high school English teachers held this belief. Ms. Padgett, her tenth grade compositon and eleventh grade grammar teacher, stated that she believed the writing process was "important." The meaning attached to her belief that writing is a process is especially crucial here. For example, when teacher-researcher Nancy Sommers (1980) makes this brief statement, she means that writing is a recursive (non-linear) process. However, given Ms. Padgett's teaching behavior, we can assume Ms. Padgett views writing as a linear process. Her composition students were asked to "process" a piece of writing in two stages: (1) jottings and outline and (2) a final draft for evaluation. Since she graded the jottings and outlines, she apparently perceived this step or stage as fixed. In Charlene's case, there was always a huge discrepancy between the grade she received on her jottings and outlines and on her products. Charlene was expected to know how to produce good products. Ms. Padgett repeatedly judged Charlene's products as faulty, and the two battled over corrections. Ms. Thompson, Charlene's composition (research paper) teacher, clearly believed writing to be a three-stage (linear) process: Step One--Formulate a thesis; Step Two--Make an outline; Step Three--Write a paper based on the thesis and outline.

Belief: Writing is outer-directed.

Source

Each of the preceding beliefs about the nature of writing and the belief that critical evaluation of writing is the responsibility of the teacher played a role in the formation of this more general belief about the nature of writing. Charlene believed there was a way to write known by her teachers and good writers. She tried to write that way: she tried to "put together grammar and ideas;" she tried to produce papers of a certain teacher-designated length; she tried to write, using her teachers' steps; she tried to correct her flawed products. When [school] writing, Charlene concluded, "you have to write in English." That writing could be inner-directed outside school only became a possibility to Charlene late in her career when her boyfriend genuinely responded to her writing. Still, she had yet to reach the point where this fact had changed her belief system.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Four categories of beliefs emerged from the data: beliefs about (1) self as writer, (2) good writers/good writing, (3) evaluation of writing, and (4) the nature of writing. What follows is a combined listing of beliefs from all three cases according to category. For case-specific beliefs and an exploration of their sources, see Chapter 4.

(1) Beliefs about self as writer

"I'm a fair writer." (Tom)

"I'm an average writer." (Jan)

"I can't write." (Charlene)

(2) Beliefs about good writers

Good writers write with ease.

Good writers do not make errors.

Good writers know the way to write.

Good writers know what they want to say before they write.

Good writers use "flowery" language.

(3) Beliefs about the evaluation of writing

Critical evaluation of writing is the responsibility of the teacher.

Evaluation of writing equals the evaluation of the writer-person.

(4) Beliefs about the nature of writing

Writing is a linear process.

Writing is learned from instruction. (Teachers know the way to write.)

Writing involves directly transferring thoughts from mind to paper.

Writing equals correctness.

Writing is "putting together grammar and ideas."

A paper must be a certain length.

Writing ability should be acquired by a certain time/age.

To the three writers in this sample, writing meant writing correctly for a teacher's steps and various other external constraints (time, length, style, form). In all cases, the act of writing seemed to be an act separate from thinking--predicated on students already knowing what they had to say, to whom and why. Writing seemed more a teacher-based mystery than a highly-developed extension of human cognition.

Topics were teacher-designated. "They express themselves better if they have a sense of direction from the teacher," remarked one teacher. Complained another, "Students don't want to write about what you want them to write about and then...if you say pick a topic, they write about what they did over the summer and then that just perpetuates year after year and that's all they ever write about themselves."

Writing was always directed to the teacher. Jan even tried to figure out how one of her teachers wrote. She never observed him writing or read anything that he had written but she carefully observed the words and sentences of hers that he crossed out. "This would tell me how he writes," Jan explained, " ..it helped me get a better grade." The teachers of these three student writers did not seem to want "the record of an idea developing" (Shaughnessy, 1977). Instead, the writing of these students was always on display; they were constantly called upon to perform, to go "public" with their writing. Students wrote primarily to please the teacher and earn a grade rather than to please themselves and to learn.

It's interesting that although teachers expected writing to be "public," little attention appeared to be given to the role of critical reading in the development of writing abilities. The students in this sample had little experience critically reading either their peers' writing or their own. They appeared to view critical reading as the responsibility of the teacher-critic and consequently, as writers, developed a dependency on their teachers. Sometimes teachers requested that students have peers "check over" their writing, presumably for surface errors, such as spelling

and punctuation. One of Jan's teachers tried peer reading once but found students "just superficially criticized" writing. She explained, "In their senior year, they hadn't been prepared to evaluate, and considering all I was supposed to do--produce a research paper among other things..."

A research paper was required writing for all three students during their last two years of high school. According to one teacher, "The research paper was the big trauma." In all cases, the teachers led the students through the research paper step by step, following a linear, building-block model of composing. "The paper was composed in stages, week by week. For two weeks, the students worked on developing thesis statements...Then a preliminary outline was required by the third week and so on...through most of the semester," explained one of Jan's teachers. She also added that "no student could do poorly on it because it was so structured...any conscientious student could make a B, if not an A." One of Charlene's teachers admitted that her students did not do much writing in her advanced composition class: "The course was more how to do research...footnotes and bibliography and outlining."

In the Preface to Searching Writing: A Contextbook (1980), Ken Macrorie condemns the research paper as "an exercise in badly done bibliography, often an introduction to the art of plagiarism, and a triumph of meaninglessness--for both writer and reader":

> The principal reason education doesn't 'take' better than it does is that it's a closed loop, with the knowledge and experience of experts on one side and no way for it to flow into or over on the other side, where in darkness-unarticulated, unreflected upon, unused--lie the knowledge and experience of students. The discipline of real learning consists of the self and the others flowing into each other. (p. 13)

These students writers, especially with regard to the research paper, were usually directed by their teachers to find a thesis statement (to know what wanted to say) before writing. Often they "fished" for a thesis statement that would meet with teacher approval. In some cases, their teachers even gave them thesis statements. In all cases, writing appeared to be viewed as mechanistic, associated with formulating and supporting a thesis statement rather than with making meaning.

From years of formulating thesis statements and outlining before writing, these students are likely to have inferred that meaning is set, that meaning does not change with writing/thinking. They might also have inferred that ambiguity (not knowing what you want to say) should be avoided and that proficient writers think clearly from the start. Students in this sample were never directed by their teachers to use writing to discover meaning (what they wanted to say); instead, they were continually directed to use writing to communicate to some "educated other," usually the teacher, meaning they had not yet discovered for themselves.

Not only was the range of writing limited but also the frequency. Writing was compartmentalized into separate courses or units within an English course. Tom and Charlene took only one composition course. Charlene's course lasted ten weeks and while Tom's lasted one semester, the time was devoted to the writing of one short research paper. While Jan's senior English teacher complained that Jan had "a big problem," Jan earned an A one semester and a B another semester under this teacher because "little writing was required."

Several teachers claimed to take an "integrated" approach to grammar and writing. One of Charlene's grammar teachers had her students "incorporate" grammatical structures they had studied into their writing. Tom's advanced composition teacher believed Tom would have been a better writer if he had taken a usage course before taking a composition course. If these students need to improve their writing, their teachers often gave them more skills work. Writing came to be associated with skills and drills. The students came to believe writing could be learned, in part, through skills activities and instruction, just as their teachers believed.

When these three writers had difficulty writing, they often blamed themselves. Why couldn't they directly transfer their thoughts from their minds to their papers? Why did they change their minds in the middle of writing? Why couldn't they write like they assumed good writers (and their teachers) wrote--with ease and without error? Why hadn't they learned how to write by the time they graduated from high school? Where had they failed in their development as writers? And to what extent could the source of their failure be traced to their teachers?

This study revealed that students' beliefs about writing (which determine their attitudes toward writing) are shaped, to a great extent, by their teachers' beliefs about writing. Since the students in this sample were inexperienced writers and never observed other writers (or their teachers) writing, they depended on learning to write by instruction. This dependency resulted in their getting a fragmented sense of the purpose and function of writing, because their teachers were guided by an oversimplified model of the writing process. Consequently, these students were guided (or misguided) by numerous misconceptions about writing which contributed to the development of negative attitudes toward writing and hindered their development as writers.

In all cases, the students depended on their teachers as judges of good writing: they believed teachers knew the way to write. Those students who were school-experienced enough to produce what their teachers judged to be good writing perhaps benefited from their teachers' product-picking. Less experienced students, like those in this sample, while they survived academically, failed to advance as writers.

Chapter 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Implications for Teaching

> "Teaching composition as [an inner-directed] process can put students in touch with their own minds; it can give them back their language" (Berthoff, 1981, p. 22).

Since attitude is learned and the writing of so many students, especially inexperienced writers, is limited to school writing, teachers could play a key role in shaping student attitudes toward writing; indeed, they perhaps are the most powerful influence. Teachers need to become aware of the role of the cognitive dimension of attitude (beliefs) in the development of writing abilities. In the act of writing, most student writers experience some attitudinal interference which might be reduced through effective teacher intervention. Unfortunately, however, students' misconceptions about the nature of writing are often reinforced or created by teachers. Effective teacher intervention is dependent upon teacher attitude toward writing. Teachers cannot intervene effectively if their teaching is guided (or misguided) by their own misconceptions about the act of writing and an oversimplified model of composing.

Teacher understanding of the nature of writing should be grounded both in direct experience and in research. Writing teachers should first of all be writers: writing should be active in their lives. And second, writing teachers, like all teachers, should continue to be learners: they should be informed by current research. Anyone who writes, for example knows firsthand what research confirms--that writing/thinking is not an orderly, linear, step-by-step process but a recursive, to-and-fro process that grows more like "a seed than a line" (Somers, 1980, p. 386).

In order to become more knowledgeable about the nature of writing, teachers need to examine their own attitudes and recognize any misconceptions. They might review their own writing histories to explore possible sources for their beliefs. Smith (1981), who discusses twenty-one misconceptions about the act of writing, believes recognition should be enough to affect classroom instruction. However, beliefs--especially ones that have been held intensely over a period of time--are not easily revised. There is no magical "ah-ha" transformation from misconception recognition to belief revision. Belief revision is a gradual process which begins with dissonance and questioning.

Teacher recognition and revision of misconceptions--understanding the inner-directed nature of writing--does not guarantee, however, that classroom instruction will change and learners will benefit. Some teachers may not know how to apply their new understanding in the classroom: probably they teach as they were taught; perhaps they are unaware of the mismatch and think they are applying their understanding but, in fact, are not; or possibly they believe that their own practices would not be appropriate for apprentice writers.

Teacher behavior can also give rise to misconceptions. For example, while teachers might not equate writing with correctness, if their only response to student writing is marking errors, then they will send students the wrong message, focusing student attention on grammar and spelling rather than on meaning. Teacher attention to "correctness" might also lead students to believe that proficient writers, as well as their teachers, write without error. As a result, students may fail to perceive themselves as writers because they do not write "correctly."

Teachers need to learn to critically observe and evaluate their own teaching. Recognition and revision of their own misconceptions about the act of writing should be followed by scrutiny of classroom instruction. "Such scrutiny--whether by means of videotaping classes, asking other teachers to observe, or by some self-examination--is essential if teachers are to grow, to refine their teaching" (Allen, 1980, p. 99). Teachers who come to understand writing as a complex, cognitive, inner-directed process need to

re-define their roles as teachers, re-view students as writers, and re-create classroom environments for learning.

Teachers need to establish a collaborative rather than adversarial relationship with students. Instead of viewing themselves as examiners of students' written products, teachers should view themselves as writing consultants whose role is to respond to student writing in process. "Evaluation, then, is the natural conclusion of the process of response and negotiation, carried through successive drafts...By negotiating those changes rather than dictating them, the teacher returns control of the writing to the student" (Brannon and Knoblauch, 1982, p. 166).

Teachers often view themselves as "the authorities, intellectually maturer, rhetorically more experienced, technically more expert than their apprentice writers" (Brannon and Knoblauch, 1982 p. 158) and feel free to "correct" any deviations from the ideal text (the teacher's conception of what the text ought to look like). Consequently, many student writers never experience the feeling of success in school-sponsored writing. They either repeatedly fail to please the teacher (to discover what the teacher wanted and earn good grades) or even if they win teacher approval, they often fail to please themselves. One student in this study concluded that she could not write. According to Smith (1981), "there is only one difference between writers and people who do not write--writers write (p. 794). In order for students to perceive themselves as writers, teachers need to perceive students as writers, to respect students as authors.

The teacher should not be the sole reader of student writing. "Especially when writing is being learned, there is great need for and advantage in people working together...The ability to write alone comes with experience, and is not always easy or necessary" (Smith, 1981, p. 796). As students develop their critical reading abilities by responding to the evolving texts of other student writers in the classroom, they will eventually internalize criteria for effective writing and become more independent readers and writers.

Applebee (1981), in a report of writing in secondary schools, recommends that teachers increase the frequency of writing as well as the range of possibilities for using writing in less artificial ways, as "a tool for learning rather than as a means to display acquired knowledge" (p. 101). Teachers need to improve the frequency of writing, not by assigning more papers but by requiring multiple drafts; more emphasis should be placed on revision. As Moffet (1968) would argue, the relationship between writing and thinking grows rather than develops linearly.

The classroom "environment...can modify in that it can help or hinder..." (Montessori, 1964, p. 105). Writing teachers can use their knowledge and experience--their expertise--to help learners become guided by beliefs about writing which will help them to develop as writers. They can create an environment in which writing is shared as well as evaluated and in which students actually want to send messages in hopes of a genuine response.

One student writer in this sample tentatively formed beliefs that could have enabled him to develop as a writer; (1) writing is a way of learning and (2) you learn to write by writing. However, since his teachers did not reinforce these beliefs, they were not intensely held and therefore did not enhance his development as a writer.

Teachers who adhere to the transmission concept of education view learning as the acquisition of what is already known and act as agents through which knowledge and skills are directly transmitted to the student, a passive receptor. Teaching writing from this view of learning is

> simply a matter of assigning topics and correcting the resulting work. But the fact is that teaching composition by arbitrarily setting topics and then concentrating on the mechanics of expression and the conventions governing correct usage does not guarantee that students will learn to write competently, and it certainly does not encourage the discovery of language either as an instrument of knowing or as our chief means of shaping and communicating ideas and experience. (Berthoff, 1981, p. 9).

The problem is that while their written products may eventually become less flawed, students will not learn to use writing as a process of coming-to-know or as a means of shaping experience.

The transmission view of teaching and learning to write does not encourage students to discover for themselves; instead passive learning is encouraged--the learner is left out of learning and the writer out of writing. Unless students become active learners unless their writing matters to them, they will be constantly trying to unravel what it is the teacher wants. The findings of this inquiry dramatically point to the need to develop a philosophy of learning writing which places the writer-learner at center. We cannot solve the problem simply by the red pen or being kinder. We need a larger revolution regarding the nature of writing and learning and self in the schools.

Implications for Further Research

More research studies which focus on the attitudinal dimension of writing--what Emig (1971) refers to as "the invisible component"--are needed. This study provides a basis for the development of hypotheses and the beginning of a formal theory of the development of attitude toward writing. The size of the sample of college freshman writers from the same research population could be enlarged to include a greater range of negative attitudes toward writing, writing abilities, and prior writing experience. A similar study chould be conducted with college freshman writers who are enrolled in freshman composition instead of basic writing.

Comparative studies could also be conducted, for example, regarding the effect of placement (in basic writing or freshman composition) on attitude toward writing of college freshman writers of varied abilities and backgrounds. Attitudes toward writing of inexperienced and experienced college writers (perhaps freshmen and juniors) could also be compared, as well as the attitudes of various cultural groups.

Case histories of student writers with positive attitudes toward writing should be conducted. Do students with positive attitudes, especially

inexperienced writers, necessarily have a realistic understanding of the nature of composing? Why are some student writers able to develop their writing abilities in spite of poor instruction?

Some questions could serve as the basis of correlation studies: How does personality, particularly self-concept, affect the formation of attitude toward writing? What is the relationship between attitude toward writing and syntactic fluency, syntactic maturity and conceptual macurity? What is the relationship of attitude toward writing and attitude toward reading?

Now that there is methodological and theoretical framework for a case history approach which combines both attitude and composing theory, case studies which reveal current composing processes of writers could be added to case histories. Longitudinal studies could be conducted of student writers in the process of forming attitudes toward writing.

Micro-enthnographic studies which focus on the development of attitude toward writing in various classrooms could be conducted. The role of peers as well as the role of teachers in attitude formation could be considered. Macro-ethnographic studies, which would include the larger school picture and family backgrounds, could also be conducted.

Based on the findings of this study, perhaps the most promising area of investigation is teacher attitude toward writing. The writing histories of teachers, including possible sources of their beliefs about the nature of writing, could be explored. Studies which relate a teacher's formal training to approaches in teaching composition and to attitude toward writing could be conducted. Several related questions might be pursued: In what ways does a teacher's model of learning--or lack of one--affect the development of student attitude toward writing and learning? How does teacher's cultural and educational background affect the attitude of a student with a different background? What role does a teacher's empathy capability play in the formation of student attitude toward writing?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Writing Sample Placement Test, Old Dominion University

FACTS ABOUT THE WRITING SAMPLE PLACEMENT TEST

UNIVERSITY POLICY: Each student (with or without transfer credit for freshman composition) will be responsible for taking the Writing Sample Placement Test and, if necessary, for following a program that will upgrade writing skills.

PURPOSE: The Writing Sample Placement Test evaluates the writing skills of all incoming students. Students without credit for freshman composition are evaluated to determine whether they should be placed in English 110 (freshman composition), General Studies 050 (Basic Writing), or ESL (English for non-native speakers of English).

Students with credit for freshman composition are evaluated to determine whether their writing skills show weaknesses that would affect their performance on the Exit Examination of Writing Proficiency (a graduation requirement for students graduating under the 1979-80, or subsequent, catalog).

DESCRIPTION: The Writing Sample Placement Test is a 90-minute essay test. A student is expected to write a 500/500-word expository essay responding to one of two "should," "would," or "could" questions derived from three topic areas: Basic Human Rights, Commercial Television, and Environmental Regulation. The essay should have an introduction that contains a thesis statement, a body of paragraphs supporting the thesis statement, and a conclusion.

TESTING SESSIONS: Students who attend the University's summer Preview sessions will take the test then. Students who do not attend Preview should contact the Office of Academic Counseling and Testing, (804) 440-3697, Room 200, Old Administration Building, to register for one of the regular testing sessions given during the academic year.

RESULTS: Students without credit for freshman composition will be placed in one of the following: English 110 - for students whose writing indicates a readiness for freshman composition, General Studies 050 - for students whose writing indicates weaknesses that would hinder their progress in freshman composition, or ESL - for non-native speakers of English whose writing indicates that they are not ready for English 110 or General Studies 050.

Students with credit for freshman composition will receive a letter indicating that their writing skills correspond to one of the following levels: level 1 - writing skills are superior to those of the average freshman student entering English 110, level 2 - writing skills are equivalent to those of the average freshman student entering English 110, level 3 - writing skills are weaker than those of the average freshman student entering English 110, or level 4 - writing skills are equivalent to those of a student entering Generl Studies 050. For both levels 3 and 4, the specific areas of weakness will be indicated.

NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS: The results of writing samples taken during summer Preview sessions are available from the Preview counselors. However, Preview students who have transfer credit for freshman composition will receive their results by mail.

All students who take the writing sample during the academic year (at a regular testing session) will receive their results by mail.

RETESTING: There is a ten-week waiting period before a student may retake the Writing Sample Placement Test.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE WRITING SAMPLE PLACEMENT TEST

Earlier you were notified that you would be required to write an essay of 400-500 words (about four pages) on a "should" or "would" or "could" question derived from the following three topics: 1) Basic Human Rights, 2) Television, and 3) Education. You were told to expect two questions derived from the three topics, from which you would have to select one for your essay. The two questions follow; select <u>one</u> for your essay:

1.
2.

You may, of course, respond affirmatively or negatively to the question you choose. You should state your own thesis or controlling idea and develop it with reasons, explanations, illustrations, etc. The concern is not with how much you know about the question but with how well you state, develop, and explain what you do know.

Your Response (in essay form) should have

an <u>introduction</u> which

-has an introductory sentence or two placing your topic in an overall context.

-has a thesis statement with which a reader may agree or disagree.

-has a statement indicating how you intend to develop your topic.

a <u>body</u> which

-develops your topic logically and coherently, with a balance of generalizations and relevant and specific details.

a <u>conclusion</u> which

-restates your thesis and gives the reader the feeling that your discussion is complete.

YOU WILL BE ALLOWED 90 MINUTES FOR THE WRITING SAMPLE.

The essay you write will be graded, and you will be informed of the results. Your performance on the essay will be used to determine whether or not you are ready to register for English 110, or the level of your writing skills if you already have credit for English 110. The students ready for English 110 are those whose writing is relatively free of mistakes in sentence structure, usage, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and serious problems in organization. The students who need to enroll in General Studies 050 are primarily those whose writing shows deficiencies in grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and/or serious problems in expressiveness and in the rudiments of expository writing.

GRADER NUMBER_____

EVALUATION CRITERIA

DIMENSION I: ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A. ORGANIZATION

1. INTRODUCTION

POINTS

3 ____ LACKS AN INTRODUCTION (32)
1 ____ LACKS A CLEAR THESIS STATEMENT (32a)
1 ____ LACKS A PLAN FOR INTENDED DEVELOPMENT (32a)
1 ____ CONTAINS EXTRANEOUS MATERIAL (32a)

2. BODY

1 ____ LACKS COHERENCE WITHIN PARAGRAPH (31b)
1 ____ LACKS COHERENCE WITHIN ESSAY (32d,e)
1 ____ LACKS UNITY WITHIN PARAGRAPH (31a)
1 ____ LACKS UNITY WITHIN ESSAY (32d,e)
1 ____ LACKS EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHING (32g)

3. CONCLUSION

2 ____ LACKS A CONCLUSION (32)
1 ____ FAILS TO RESTATE THESIS STATEMENT (32g)
1 ____ FAILS TO CONCLUDE (32g)
1 ____ CONTAINS EXTRANEOUS MATERIAL (32g)

B. DEVELOPMENT

2 ____ FAILS TO EXPLAIN IDEAS PRESENTED (31c,d)
2 ____ LACKS SPECIFIC DETAILS (31c,d)
2 ____ FAILS TO LOGICALLY PRESENT IDEAS (31c,d; 23a-d)
1 ____ LACKS TRANSITIONS WITHIN PARAGRAPH (31b)
5 ____ FAILS TO ADDRESS THESIS (32a)
5 ____ LACKS SUBSTANCE (32)
20 ____ FAILS TO WRITE ON ASSIGNED TOPIC
40 ____ ESSAY IS TOO SHORT (300 words or less)
60 ____ ESSAY IS LONG (over 600 words)

TOTAL D1_____

DIMENSION II: EXPRESSION

A. AWARENESS OF AUDIENCE

1 POINT PER ERROR

____ STYLE SHIFT (27 e)
____ POINT OF VIEW SHIFT (27d)

B. WORD CHOICE

____ CLICHES (20c)
____ WORDINESS/REDUNDANCY (21a-c)
____ VAGUENESS (20a)
____ CONNOTATION/DENOTATION ERRORS (20a,b)
____ OMITTED WORDS (22)
____ NONSTANDARD/INAPPROPRIATE WORD USAGE (19b-e)

TOTAL D2_____

DIMENSION III: SENTENCE STRUCTURE

A. SENTENCE PROBLEMS

1 POINT PER ERROR

____ MISUSED SENTENCE FRAGMENTS (2)
____ RUN-ON SENTENCES (3)
____ COMMA SPLICES (3)
____ OUT-OF-CONTROL/UNCLEAR STRUCTURES (1; 23a,b; 24; 25; 26)
____ MISPLACED ADJECTIVAL PHRASES (25a,b)

B. VARIETY

50 points per essay

____ TOO MANY SHORT SENTENCES (24a,b; 29; 30)
____ LACKS SENTENCE VARIETY (24a,b; 29; 30)

TOTAL D3_____

DIMENSION IV: SPELLING, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION

A. SPELLING

1 POINT EACH DIFFERENT ERROR

____ SPELLING ERRORS (18a,c,d)
____ HOMONYM ERRORS (18b; 19i)
____ SPLIT-WORD ERRORS (18f)

TOTAL # OF SPELLING ERRORS_____

B. USAGE

1 POINT PER ERROR

____ VERB FORMS (1a; 7a-d)
____ NOUN FORMS (1b,c; 15a; 18e)
____ SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT (6a)
____ ADJECTIVE/ADVERB FORMS (4)
____ PRONOUN CASE AGREEMENT (5)
____ PRONOUN ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT (6b)
____ UNCLEAR PRONOUN REFERENCE (28)
____ CAPITALIZATION (9)

C. PUNCTUATION

1 POINT PER ERROR

____ END MARKS (17a-c)
____ COMMAS (12; 13)
____ ALL OTHERS (14; 15; 16; 17d-h)

TOTAL D4_____

STUDENT'S LAST NAME_____ PLACEMENT - CIRCLE ONE

LAST 4 DIGITS OF SSN_____ 050 110 ESL

PLACEMENT

There are many possible combination of error counts in the four evaluated dimensions, and there is no absolute formula for deciding whether a student places in English 110 (Freshman Composition). Generally speaking, students with high error counts--particularly in Dimensions III and IV (over 3 in III and over 15 in IV)--are placed in General Studies 050, the developmental writing course taught at the Writing Center. The student who places in English 110 typically has low error counts in all four dimensions. However, a student with an error count of 15-20 concentrated in one or two of the items in Dimension IV (and a very low or no error counts in Dimension I, II, and III) could fall into a borderline category. In those cases, placement is determined by the level of maturity and control that the student has achieved as a writer--matters revealed by choices of vocabulary and syntax. Although these matters are not quantified on the evaluation grid, the examination readers are oriented to make placement judgements on the basis of the non-quantifiable criteria. These include, but are not limited to, syntactic complexity and variation, specific, rather than vague, terms of reference and sophisticated word usage. All readers are encouraged to ask for a second reading whenever they have any doubts about placement.

Writing sample placement test scores
for the three case study participants.

Student	D I	D II	D III	D IV
Jan	9	15	11	9
Tom	9	8	8	8
Charlene	1	8	0	15

Name: Jan

Writing Sample
Placement Test
Old Dominion University

WOULD TV SHOWS WITHOUT SET AND VIOLENCE
ATTRACT AS MANY VIEWERS?

Television shows of family and adult screening will not attract viewers if the shows were without sex and violence. With their humerous jokes and abusive language, television shows basically would not be the same, both in content and plot, without the use of sexual actions and violence.

"Saturday Night Live," a favorite comedy among the young adult age group widely contains both sex and violence in their show. Since the show is on prime time, the extent of these actions may go abroad. Of the majority time of the show, either sex or violence, or both at the same time, occurs. If the communications committee of congress bans all sexual actions and abusive violence on television shows, viewers will stop watching "Saturday Night Live" for the show hasn't any script to act upon unless the writers change their idea of the show, but to what? What actions, other than sex and violence, has more excitement and contentment in the drama of the show? These conversions will have to be changed in all types of showing, from childrens' cartoons to adults' comedy shows.

Another show that will automatically fail in the television world would be all soap operas. These shows are all built around the uses of sex and violence. A man will kill another man for the love of his wife. This is the main topic for many soap operas. Again, the question arises: what other emotions can add to a person's enjoyment for the viewing of television. Changes will again take place in this type of television show.

Children's cartoons have more of the use of violence than sex. Yet, parents still let their children view them. For instance, the cartoon, "The Road Runner/Bugs Bunny Show," mainly consists of violence. Either the coyote desperately trying to kill and eat the roadrunner or Elmer Fudd, is attempting to kill the rabbit during hunting season, all events consist of

violence. During one show of the "Road Runner Show," the coyote defies all natural laws of injury and death. It may be kill at least twenty times in one show because it's tricks for trying to kill the roadrunner backfires. Children viewers laugh and joke at these violent actions not knowing that some may use these tactice in later life as criminals. Very little sex appears in cartoons except for a few occasional instances. Throughout one cartoon, Pepe La Pew, a skunk, chases a cat through the meadows of France. Hearts circulate Pepe's head and a heart pounds in and out of his chest as he nears the confused and tormented cat. Love and sex are the main plot for this children's cartoon. Again, if changes must occur, children will probably continue to watch these cartoons. Early in the mornings, especially Saturdays, are times when children can do something quiet without the supervision of their parents. The children are limited with their activities. If the cartoons become nonsexual and non-violence, they may continue to watch it without any dismay or go into the playrooms and play Barbie and Ken or play army, in which the activities display sex and violence. According to a Psychology instructor at _____ High School, children basically don't care what they watch; they just want something simple and unsophisticated. Children may be the only age group that won't stop watching television if the television shows were without sex and violence.

News on television basically envolves on violence in the world and special editions. People, at all ages, need to come familiar about the world and its problems. Many involves violence and the destruction it creates. Take for instance the riots now being held in England. People, in all nations, should know the cause and effect of the riots in England. If the news network didn't reveal these riots on television, people may visit Liverpool as a tourist. It would be a big disappointment to them especially if they were killed. Even though violence isn't very helpful in our society, the people definitely need to know the violence in the areas and its circumstances. If the television news network cut off all violence-related events, the show may only last ten to fifteen minutes. Violence should be known to the public but not to the extreme of the variety shows, in which they overact violence. Though this paragraph is a contrast of all the other paragraphs, news network tells the complete truth of violence in the world. It is essential and all uniform to inform the public about all types of violence that occurred that recent day.

Since I reviewed all the angles of television shows, children shows, young adult shows, adult shows, and news, I reveal and concluded that television shows without sex and violence would not attract as many viewers as the shows with sex and violence. Again and again, the question arises, what other emotion or reaction can take place and make the viewer a happier and satisfied with the show he's watching?

Name: Tom

Writing Sample
Placement Test
Old Dominion University

SHOULD MORE EDUCATIONAL SHOWS BE PRESENTED
ON COMMERCIAL TV?

There should be more educational shows presented on commercial television for the reason of extended learning of our nation's population. Many people watch television everyday and learn many ideas. In this paper, I will discuss reasons and facts why these ideas should come from an educational program.

To many people in our world, television is their only means of communication with the world outside their home. Children too young for school watch television a large amount of their time. Children tend to copy many things they see through the day. Increasing the number of educational programs on televison would respond in more children coping educational activities rather than the unlawful, harmful activities that occur on most of our commerical television today.

Uneducational programs on today's commercial televison is corrupting many individual's minds. The mid-day soap operas, that many people watch diligently, force the ideas of murder, sex, cheating, etc. into our minds constantly. Shows of this sort do nothing to increase the value of education in our society. Home Box office has made it possible for many young adults under the ages of eighteen years of age, to watch restricted movies frequently. These such movies also stress the ideas of sex and violence. I personally feel that shows of this kind are poorly chosen for our society.

National Geographic wildlife shows, news documentaries, Sesame Street, just naming a few of the educational programs on television, should be increased greatly. Cultural shows should be planned specifically for each area in which you live. Series that will educate in your own life style, in the history of your city and in special events in your area.

Sesame Street, a children's educational program has many things to offer to the younger generation. This show provides spelling lessons, reading lessons, pronunciation lessons, and ways of figuring everyday problems in their life. News programs can provide us with foreign affairs events, along with nation events also.

On the other, programs such as "Roots" caused many incidences of racial violence on its opening. Schools here in Norfolk were plagued with riots that normally did not occur.

With the growing amount of corruption and violence in our world today, we should be very careful of what is entering our minds and our children from the programs we watch on television. Many of the ideas we receive from our TV stays in our minds and subconscious more than we realize. It is a known fact that our minds is in a trans as we watch a program, thus meaning we are more able to be reduced by the ideas given to us.

I conclude that there should be more educational programs on television. The reason for my opinion is that our country is falling apart, due to violence, and television is just making it worse.

Name: Charlene

Writing Sample
Placement Test
Old Dominion University

SHOULD MORE EDUCATIONAL SHOWS BE PRESENTED
ON COMMERCIAL TV?

Television has many different types of shows, which can be seen almost twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. A person averages at least

about six to eight hours a day watching these shows. I feel that there should be more educational shows presented on commerical television for the people to watch. I will show why I feel that more educational shows be shown by showing some advantages of showing educational programs and some disadvantages of not showing educational programs.

A disadvantage, of not showing a program that would be educational to very many people, would be if educational programs are not shown then some other kind of program would be. The type of program that would be shown would probably consist of violence, use of profanity, and ideas of sexual behavior. Violence, profanity, and ideas of sexual behavior is what is shown on television today for many young children to watch. If educational programs replaced these types of shows then the children would benefit instead of being taught violence, profanity, and ideas of sexual behavior.

The way uneducational programs affect people is another disadvantage of not showing educational programs. The violence, profanity and ideas of sexual behavior, that the children, teenagers, and adults see on television the six to eight hours a day they watches it, has an affect on them. The children see someone murdering someone, someone using profanity, or two unmarried people having sexual intercourse and they think there is nothing wrong with it. Teenagers see the same thing and they feel the same way to an extent. The use of profanity, alcohol and drugs, and the sexuality they see on television affects them. The adults are affect by television also. The adults are affect by the use of alcohol and sexuality on television mostly. There are not only disadvantages to not showing educational programs but there is also some advantages to showing it.

An advantage to showing more educational shows on television is that the people watching the programs will benefit and learn from these programs. For children and teenagers it should be shows dealing with subjects taught in school and other types of educational shows also. The programs might help the child or teenager watching the program to understand something they were taught in school better. For the adults it could be shows dealing with how to prepare foods, how to fix things around the house, how to play sports, or anything where they could learn something useful. This would save money because the adult could fix something that is broken down themselves instead of take it to the repair shop or the adult could fix a delicious dinner instead of going out to eat.

Money can be saved in making the programs also. This is another advantage. Not as many people are needed to be in the program so the salary is not going to many people. Not as much equipment is needed either, so there is more money saved. It just does not usually take as much money to make an educational program as it does a program of violence, profanity, or sexuality.

A final advantage is that people would stop watching television as much as they watch it now. People would not want to watch alot of educational programs as much as the types of programs on television now. This would be an advantage if the people would spend the time that they are not watching television with their family or doing something constructive. The time spent not watching television would be a learning experience also by learning more about your family, reading your Bible, or doing anything where you learn something.

I feel that more educational programs should be shown on commercial television. This would make this nation a better educated, and less violent nation. It would make Americans better educated, less violent and maybe even closer and friendlier with their family and fellow Americans.

APPENDIX B. Examples of Transcripts of Interviews

INTERVIEW WITH JAN

Inestigator: Jan, you wrote that you're an average writer. What did you mean?

Jan: Well, I've been in average English, you know, since--

Investigator: When does that division begin? Does it go back to elementary school?

Jan: It starts in junior high.

Investigator: So that's why you say you're an average writer, because you were in average English?

Jan: Well, yeah — and I compare me to other writers, I mean in my school and everything. I feel my work is not bad, but it's not the best.

Investigator: You also wrote that there seems to be a "mental barrier" between thoughts in your head and placing your thoughts on paper. What did you mean?

Jan: I felt that I had so much knowledge up there, but it seems when I write it just doesn't, you know, come out. Something--a barrier is there, and I can't put it on paper. You know, something's stuck. It got stuck up there, and I write something different.

Investigator: From what you really mean? Frustrating.

Jan: Yeah!

Investigator: Do you block sometimes? Actually block--you can't even make an attempt to --

Jan: Yeah, sometimes. If I, like, if I don't know the word I'm looking for, I'll just skip the whole space, like, you know - just leave a space and put a question mark there. Like when I'm trying to write a paper and thinking of ideas, I just jot all these ideas down and just pick the best one. You know.

Investigator: So when you get stuck, you will leave a space and go on, and then come back?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: It's usually a word, not a whole --

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: Do you think that all writers block sometimes?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: You enjoy writing to a certain point, is that right?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: Where do you draw the line?

Jan: Well, I don't mind writing, you know. It's just like when teachers make you write the next day -- you know there's a pressure on you and you have to sit down and do it. I can't do that, I have to take it step by step. I just can't write a paper and then edit and then I'm finished. You know, it takes time, and I don't like that.

Investigator: So you enjoy writing more when you have time?

Jan: Yeah, I like writing--except for when I get stuck.

Investigator: Do you write letters?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: Often?

Jan: Often, yeah. I write to my grandparents a lot, because they're in Ohio and Florida and you just don't pick up the telephone and call them. It's easier using an $.18 stamp.

Investigator: I bet they really enjoy hearing from you.

Jan: Yeah. And they always say that I write nice letters and stuff.

Investigator: You don't really avoid writing. You seem fairly confident. Do you fear writing?

Jan: Well, I don't mind writing, except - the only time I fear writing is when I get the paper back and I see those red marks.

Investigator: And so it makes you afraid the next time?

Jan: Yeah. I learn from my mistakes and everything, but I always feel that, you know, if I start--when I see all those red marks, I try not to do the same things over again, but the red marks make me feel, you know, depressed. I feel like I can't do anything right.

Investigator: So that's what makes you nervous, when you have to hand in something?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: You don't really fear evaluation, but you're somewhat anxious. You know that there will be red marks, and that's generally been your experience?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: Can you recall some of your experiences--times when you got papers back with red marks? Can you go back?

Jan: In my advanced composition class, the only thing I had trouble with was unnecessary words. And you know, he just marked it all out--and sometimes I had paragraphs--you know, that's the only reason I didn't have organization. Organization and unnecessary wordings were my main problem.

Investigator: Did you every feel really bad when you got a paper back? That you had wroked on --

Jan: Yeah. I'd work on it for like a week and a half in class and out of class and you feel pretty confident and then when you get it back the next day and you see all those red marks you feel like it's just a big waste of time.

Investigator: Most of your teachers used red marks, then?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: You noted that you enjoy writing but also noted writing isn't a lot of fun. There seems to be a contradiction there. This is on the anxiety survey. Is it the degree again?

Jan: Yeah. I enjoy writing, but you know it's no fun seeing those red marks.

Investigator: Do you like discussing your writing with others very much?

Jan: Yeah, well that's what we did in the advanced composition class. We discussed--we talked about our ideas, and then other people in one group, you know, said what it could be about and gave us ideas.

Investigator: Were they hard on you?

Jan: Sometimes, but it helped me a lot. You know, to think clear thoughts.

Investigator: It's fairly easy to write, except sometimes when you block. Do you think you write as well as other people?

Jan: Yeah — average.

Investigator: You noted you used writing to help you study and learn new subjects. Would you explain that?

Jan: This past history test, we had--it's called the common denominators--when you get about four or five people--people's names or places--or ideas--and then you had to write what they were related to. Well, I wrote down all the you know the main heading, and then the people under it, all the places, and you know, names and stuff like that. And that helped me a lot. And you get other important definitions. I write that down.

Investigator: It helps you remember better?

Jan: Yeah. Writing it down writes it up here. So it helps me writing. I just can't sit down and look up the word and read it. It helps a little bit, but not as much--It makes you pay more attention--

Investigator: Do you think students who write well get better grades?

Jan: Yeah. It involves a lot of subjects. English, history, you know, foreign languages. Almost every subject involves some writing. You have to have some knowledge, you know, of that subject to put down on paper for organization and everything.

Investigator: Two people can know the material well, but the one who writes better, you think, would probably get a better grade?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: You wrote that you felt uneasy when we first talked because the student doesn't usually have a "personal agreement" with his/her instructor. Would you elaborate, dipping into your past relationships with teachers, particularly English teachers? You never had a trusting relationship in a classroom?

Jan: No. Like my last English teacher--she told me flat out that I couldn't write--that I wasn't a very good writer and she goes, "I know other people have said that." And I said, "No, they haven't--they thought my writing was average and everything." And she said, "Well, you have to improve your writing." You know, she was frank to me. I never had that.

Investigator: Frankness--but to say you're not a good writer?

Jan: Yeah. That really gave me a big complex. That was when we were writing a research paper --

Investigator: That wasn't Advanced Composition though. That was in the other class?

Jan: In English class, yeah.

Investigator: With Ms. Webster?

Jan: Yeah. She has a personality, like she cuts people down a lot. And nobody likes that in her classroom.

Investigator: So it wasn't just you, though,--

Jan: It was a lot of other people in the class, too.

Investigator: In front of the class sometimes?

Jan: No. Not in front of it. If she does it, it was not to embarrass you. Like I was talking to this other guy in my English class last year--and he knows a lot of people in her class who were put in 050 (Basic Writing) too.

Investigator: Oh, really?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: He noticed that?

Jan: Yeah. It could be telling us something? Maybe we got the wrong teacher.

Investigator: Well, it doesn't sound like you had a very trusting relationship. What about with other teachers? English teachers?

Jan: In my 10th and 11th grade year, both my English teachers were helpful, and we were on a more personal level than a lot of other teachers. Have you ever heard of American Studies? Well, I was in that and like we were really good friends--me and Ms. Hull--she was more on the personal level, because she had kids our own age and she knew how to deal with them, I guess. I liked her. I think both my 10th and 11th grade English teachers were my best teachers.

Investigator: Ms. Wall and Ms. Hull. You say you think they were your best teachers? Is it in part because of the understanding?

Jan: Yeah. If you don't like the teacher and you don't trust him, you're not going to do good in that class. You have to have some type of positive attitude to go in the class you know.

Investigator: And trust your writing with that teacher. So you don't feel that those teachers cut you down in terms of writing.

Jan: No. They have to criticize some to help you but not as much as Ms. Webster.

Investigator: And Mr. Wilson, too, would you say?

Jan: He was critical. He helped me too. One time, you know he read good examples and bad examples. Well, he read a bad example of mine--and I felt really embarrassed. And then I had promised myself that I'd help myself and try and try and get better grades. And the next paper was one of the best papers in the class and he read it, and I was proud of that.

Investigator: Let's go back to elementary school. You said by 6th grade you mastered the fundamentals of writing. Is that true?

Jan: Well, by the time you go to junior high--you know, 7th, 8th, 9th grade you kind of know basic sentence structures and learn the spelling rules and you kind of know a lot of fundamentals of writing. I mean, not of writing but to do writing. Organization and everything.

Investigator: Can you recall any particular experiences in 5th grade or 6th grade? What about the 5th grade teacher?

Jan: Yeah, she was our Language Arts teacher for English, reading and spelling and stuff like that. And she helped me a lot. She was a real excellent teacher. She was another teacher that I can trust and she helped me and everything. I guess things got stuck in my mind and I learned them, you know, as a positive attitude toward her and toward the class.

Investigator: Can you recall any writing experiences in there?

Jan: No.

Investigator: Not anything special sticks out, just that it was a positive experience?

Jan: Yeah. In 6th grade, we had to write book reports every month. Different types of books--you know, fiction, nonfiction, science-fiction, stuff like that. You know, that was the only writing we did.

Investigator: What about in 7th and 8th grade?

Jan: Let's see.

Investigator: Nothing stands out in terms of writing?

Jan: No.

Investigator: 9th grade? I see you've listed several teachers.

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: These aren't just English teachers? These are all the teachers?

Jan: Ms. _____, she was a drama teacher, too. So she kinda knew a lot more you know. We had to write a lot of papers, well, some, a lot of papers in there. She was, I don't know, she was really nice. I could trust her too. Nothing really stands out.

Investigator: What about in the 8th grade? Who was the Language Arts teacher?

Jan: Mrs. _____. We all liked her. I mean the whole class did. She was, I don't know, she told us personal stories, I guess just to get on a personal level. We didn't have to do that much writing, I don't think. Just the regular stuff, you know. The regular papers--how was your summer?

Investigator: You had your share of those?

Jan: Yeah. Especially in elementary school. You know it was something to write aout and let the teachers know how you write, so you don't copy other people's papers. That's what my 12th grade teacher did, Ms. Brewster. She had us write a lot of essays before we wrote our term paper, and that --

Investigator: So she could become familiar with your writing, was that it?

Jan: So you don't have to copy someone else's term paper. It was a good idea. I think I know one guy who did that, and he passed, barely.

Investigator: Students in Average English didn't write as much as students in Superior English, is that right?

Jan: That's right. I know a couple of people in Superior English, and all they did was write and read books and wrote about three to five papers on that one book. Character analysis, the theme, what they thought about it—along that line.

Investigator: In high school, you moved on to essay writing. Is that correct? You weren't doing essay writing until maybe 10th grade?

Jan: Yeah. That's right.

Investigator: And you wrote that the teachers in high school instructed the students to just write the paper, not how to write, but to write it and get it done.

Jan: Yeah. That's all they did. Like I remember--well, I don't remember any particular teacher, they used to all just say "write." Write either about a book or something or an experience and they just said, you know, write it and get it done by next week. You know, they didn't tell us.

Investigator: How to go about writing?

Jan: Yeah. They just said the regular stuff, like the mechanics, spelling.

Investigator: Even in the Advanced Composition course?

Jan: No.

Investigator: Do you usually write for the teacher when you do school writing? Do you have the teacher in mind?

Jan: Yeah. You have to know really what the teacher wants to know. I don't really write you know what I like to write. Like for Mr. Wilson, he--whenever I needed help, he comes back and he crosses out a word and writes this down and then tells how he writes. So I kind of followed that and you know, it helps.

Investigator: It helps you or it helps you in terms of the grade in class?

Jan: Both. But basically in class, and grades.

Investigator: In Advanced Composition, you wrote that you "learned the fundamentals of writing essays. This was the only time I got total instruction on the art of writing." What did you mean by total instruction?

Jan: Pause --

Investigator: That course is definitely geared to essay writing.

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: So you learned the fundamentals of writing essays there?

Jan: In that class, Mr. Wilson just kind of told us to write, and then a little with our process in writing in class he instructed us how to write and some of the mechanics we should know.

Investigator: Did he give you one method? This is how to write.

Jan: No.

Investigator: Several different ways?

Jan: Yeah. The only thing he told us was to get a really well-developed thesis statement for the first statement and with that thesis statement, develop the whole paper. You know, because it goes back and corresponds with other sentences. He really didn't tell us any method that we should use.

Investigator: You also write that by the time you took Advanced Composition, you were a "hopeless case." What did you mean?

Jan: Well, I don't know. After--I knew I needed some help.

Investigator: Ms. Brewster told you that?

Jan: Yeah. I took that because I knew I'd be doing a lot of writing in college. I needed more help in writing. I knew that English wasn't just all writing papers, you know, so I decided to take that. It helped me a little bit.

Investigator: Why only a little bit?

Jan: Well, I mean, I'm in here! (laughs) I need some help.

Investigator: You received low grades in Advanced Composition.

Jan: C's. Well, Mr. Wilson, he never gives A's. And he rarely gives B's. If you have a good paper, you have a B.

Investigator: Does he announce this, or he just has this reputation?

Jan: He has a reputation like that. He never--see, he doesn't have--if you get below C, you have to rewrite it. He reads mostly A's and B's, mostly B's because he doesn't give A's.

Investigator: As examples?

Jan: Yeah. But, you know, he's a good teacher.

Investigator: Why do you think he's a good teacher?

Jan: Well, I learned a lot from him. A lot more than from other teachers. He helped me with my writing.

Investigator: But you also said that these low grades gave you a complex. You were disappointed in yourself. Can you explain?

Jan: Again, it's those red marks. You spent all that time just for those red marks and getting all those words crossed out. I just sat down and didn't really beat my brains just trying to get a good paper down and then take a rest and then go back again, just trying to improve it and everything. And somehow it just doesn't--

Investigator: And then getting the red marks--

Jan: Yeah. It just really disappointed me a lot.

Investigator: Did you end up with a C in the course?

Jan: Yeah.

Investigator: Do you think studying grammar helps improve your writing?

Jan: Yeah, because you have to know some of the mechanics and you know--you just can't have all organization and knowledge about the subject, you have to have, you know, spelling, grammar?

Investigator: When did you study grammar? Did you have a grammar class anywhere along the line?

Jan: Just in elementary school. That's all we did. And so in the early years of, you know, well--we skimmed it in high school because, we should have already learned it in elementary. I learned all mine, you know, you to 6th grade.

Investigator: Where did you learn to perfect each sentence before going on? You know, to write one sentence at a time? Where did you learn that?

Jan: I just picked it up somewhere. You see, I just do that for the first couple of sentences.

Investigator: Oh, I see.

Jan: And after that, after I know what I'm talking about, I just start freewriting and write anything I want to and then, you know, and then I go back and then the first couple of sentences are okay. You know, I look at them and see if I want to improve them. But I don't improve them that much since I already improved them before. It just helps me to get going.

Investigator: You have to have the first couple of sentences right?

Jan: Yeah, I have to know what I'm talking about. If I don't do it--it would take me forever.

Investigator: Anything else you want to mention? About your high school writing experiences particularly? In American Studies, I would assume you did a lot of writing in there and that Ms. Hull would look at the writing and the history teacher would look at the writing more for content?

Jan: They had no relation for the writing. The writing was, you know, just their own grading system.

Investigator: What do you mean--"their own grading system"?

Jan: Well, if we did an essay on a test for the history teacher, she wouldn't go to Ms. Hull to check it out. You know, they really didn't relate to each other in writing.

Investigator: Okay.

Jan: It was two separate courses. Like the only time we'd get together was when we did projects.

Investigator: In some schools, the teachers work closely together and they actually pass the writing back and forth. That's why I didn't know. It wasn't like that, though?

Jan: No.

Investigator: How did you feel going into the WSPT?

Jan: Well, I felt real confident because after I had that Advanced Composition I was--since I had it, the spring semester I knew it, and I remembered everything Mr. Wilson told me and I figured that I should go ahead and, you know, have everything that he taught me and put it down on paper.

Investigator: What are some of the things that he told you to do?

Jan: I don't know. Mostly unnecessary words. That was my main problem. I think. I guess on my WSPT I just wrote--

Investigator: You wrote a long test, you really did.

Jan: A lot of it was probably unnecessary words. You know, repeats, or something really--

Investigator: Well, you have plenty to say. How did you feel when you were placed in Basic Writing?

Jan: I felt disappointed. I guess everybody does. But I don't know--after that, that whole happy year was--

Investigator: Wasted?

Jan: (laughs) It was. I just, you know--

Investigator: You still feel that way, that it was wasted?

Jan: It wasn't. It helped me. Somehow, I don't know, but it helped me. He helped me--I don't know how to explain it--but he helped me through, you know, certain ways to write and everything. So it helped me.

Jan's Case

INTERVIEW WITH MS. BREWSTER

Investigator: You were asking me why I chose Jan's case.

Brewster: I think it's fascinating that Jan's name was given to me by you because just remembering generally all of my students last year, she strikes me as being the most negative one.

Investigator: Toward writing, or negative in general?

Brewster: Her attitude toward my criticism of her writing, which seemd to be inherited from past years. She just never liked to be criticized. When she is, she gets on a high horse. She can't handle it. So I can remember, I can just see her sitting in this classroom most disillusioned about herself.

Investigator: About herself?

Brewster: In relation to writing and my opinion of her writing. Well, should I go on with this? For example, when we were doing the research paper, we made conferences and I talked to her about her style, her involved, complex, almost unintelligible sentences. And her lovely blue eyes would cloud over with tears because she could not handle the idea that she was less than perfect. And I wondered about quite a few problems approaching college. She never really took a realistic attitude toward that and low and behold her name appears. There are very few people that strike me so clearly as this particular girl. She was one of the major college-bound types who had a big writing problem and refused to admit it to herself. That's the thing.

Investigator: So you would say she had an unrealistic picture of herself as a writer?

Brewster: Right, a very unrealistic concept of herself. Couldn't understand what was wrong.

Investigator: How did you evaluate writing in the course? Did you have her all year?

Brewster: I had her all year. She was in an average class and she came into the average class--the junior class was accelerated--so she had the concept from that group that she would just breeze right through an average group with no difficulty. And then she ran up against this writing problem which had been developing for years.

Investigator: But no one had apparently --

Brewster: Apparently not. And so when she was told bluntly that she had to clarify, simplify, and communicate, she couldn't handle it.

Investigator: Why don't you talk to me a little bit about the course, so I can get a better picture. I know she was in Advanced Composition also during her senior year.

Brewster: Right. Now I don't know what happened there. That should have really helped, but I don't think it did. In this average group, we did really basic simple stuff at the beginning--paragraphs, sentence structure, basic stuff. And from the beginning, she had

difficulty. She would never want to say something--you see, I think she was trying to be poetic and flowery and was never able to simply say something basic in a sentence. So when I would show her how to switch a phrase or a clause or just cut it out, maybe cut out whole sentences, even whole paragraphs--she got this fix somewhere in the past that to be flowery, confusing, backwards, was the thing. To simply communicate was not the thing. So what can I say? So after that basic simple writing--we went onto your standard introduction-body-conclusion-situation, and we led into the research paper, you know. She was never really prepared for it, as far as her style was concerned.

Investigator: Were you the only person in the course who responded to her writing? Or did you have some peer reading too?

Brewster: We had a little, a little bit, but not a tremendous amount because of the nature of the class. She had more background than most of the kids coming from this accelerated class and generally all the other--whenever I did turn back certain things for them to get together on, they would just superficially criticize it. So in their senior year, they really hadn't been prepared to evaluate, and considering all I was supposed to do—that is, produce a research paper among other things--

Investigator: When you evaluate writing, do you circle every error?

Brewster: Oh well, I take various methods. Sometimes I just look for one thing, depending. We move from the simpler to the more complex. Sometimes just a certain comma situation. Sometimes we're just concentrating on introductory elements. It depends. The research paper, of course, which was the big trauma, — everything.

Investigator: Did you do that in stages?

Brewster: Yes. Week by week. I could give you a schedule if you wanted to look at it--but you probably know: the thesis statement, and we'd talk over that for two weeks and have individual conferences. Preliminary outline was the third week. In very gradual stages. It took up a good part of the semester. And in-between times working on paragraphing.

Investigator: I think she made a comment in an interview with me that she was never told bluntly that she was not a good writer.

Brewster: Yeah, and I came right out and told her after a while, after she didn't seem to understand what was written on her paper by me. Then what did she say after that?

Investigator: Something about getting a complex. She appreciated the frankness, in one way, but it was rather shocking for her. And then, of course, she was taking the Advanced Composition at the same time, so between the two, and then in the senior year to have a sudden--

Brewster: Did she get that reinforcement in her Advanced Comp?

Investigator: Yes.

Brewster: Because I never had the opportunity to speak to Mr. Wilson. I do know that the junior teacher seemed to agree with me but apparently never told her. Now if I could solve a problem like Jan's in one year, I would be delighted.

Investigator: This is the difficulty with talking about negative attitude toward writing--

Brewster: Did she see the problem? I had the feeling all through the year that she felt I was the villain, I was wrong. She never really saw the problem. I understood that, so I really couldn't work on it.

Investigator: Why did it take Jan until her senior year to realize she was a "hopeless" case? I don't see her as a hopeless case.

Brewster: Just a theory possibly--because she was such a lovely girl, so popular--totally school-involved, club active--she may have affected her teachers to a degree, where they thought this is such a lovely girl-

Investigator: And she did all her work, I assume --

Brewster: She did all her work, extremely conscientious, interested in everything in the class, academically, not to mention outside the class, so maybe there was a

reluctance there over the years to take this lovely girl aside and say, "Hey, take a look at this." Her mother may be an influence in this. I remember seeing her mother, one of the few mothers who came in parents' night, totally involved in the child. The mother could have contributed to an unrealistic attitude. Everytime there was something going on in school, the mother was in charge, running it, there, present. And I definitely felt after a while, after I told Jan what I thought of her writing, that her mother felt the same way about me. This was maybe the one teacher who didn't see this girl as solid gold.

Investigator: I see what you're saying.

Brewster: I don't know, this is all --

Investigator: Speculation?

Brewster: Speculation. I think part of her problem is being so full of teenage cliches--verbal cliches. Superficial --preppy, can I say--so ingrained within her, that she was unable to pare away that superfluous dialogue and get down to what she wanted to say, and she knew that.

Investigator: That's what she meant by the "mental barrier" between her ideas and her words.

Brewster: Right. So she sounded fine, particularly to the peer group and then she tried to put that on paper, and that's not the way formal writing is--if we're talking about formal writing.

Investigator: Academic writing?

Brewster: Right. Does that help some? This is just speculation. Had Jan not gone through the American Studies, but had the further discipline of English 11 Superior writing, she probably wouldn't have come into this problem with me. Then again, had this been the case, she would have been in my 12 Superior class, so I can't say. Because she was a kid a little bit above average in an average group, she felt somewhat above them, and, therefore, was not open to criticism. If she was in my 12 S group, maybe this would have been an entirely different situation. It might not have occurred, so it could also be a scheduling difficulty. She did go, I think,

from a 10 Superior, into an American Studies thing which is like a high average group. (Note: Actually she was in English 10 Average.)

Investigator: Why would she go in there instead of to a superior class?

Brewster: Somewhere in the 10th grade--that may require another interview with the 10th grade teacher--

Investigator: I am going to do that today.

Brewster: Maybe the 10th grade teacher recommended that she go down a little bit into this American Studies thing.

Investigator: That is considered "down"?

Brewster: Down a little bit, right. It's a high average group. And then possibly her American Studies teacher recommended that she continue on in that average course of study. So it could have started back in the 10th grade. It would be interesting to find out.

Investigator: I'm curious, why did she receive an A and B in your class?

Brewster: The grade is not really based on writing. That does not reflect writing. Basically it reflects other things--reading literature.

Investigator: Of course, she was a very conscientious student. "Dutiful," as Mr. Wilson said.

Brewster: It was an overall survey course, basically. Review of grammar in the first 6 weeks.

Investigator: That's a requirement?

Brewster: Right. Forced. And mechanics. She did fine in that. Roughly five or six novels to be read outside of class. Highly objective testing on that. Did marvelous on that. Did it all, did her reading. The research paper--she really couldn't do too poorly on because it was so structured.

Investigator: Plenty of time there, too.

Brewster: Right. So covering every form of writing, starting with a history of the language going through the novel form, lectures, you know, that kind of deal, notes that would respond and indicate that they had studied--short story form, the essay form--the drama form. A "C" in Mr. Wilson's class does tell you that there's a real deficiency.

Investigator: Maybe, too, she had an unrealistic attitude because of the A and B, even though she heard your comments.

Brewster: Had my grade been exclusively on writing, it wouldn't have been--but because of the nature of the course, any conscientious student could make a B, if not an A.

Investigator: Mr. Wilson didn't have too much to say. He remembered her more as dutiful, and not particularly enthusiastic, so she wouldn't stand out in his mind, because she did her writing and she worked at it "dutifully" as he said.

Brewster: I'm surprised he didn't remember her problem, which to me is flowery, excessive, that type of thing, which would drive him crazy. Wordiness.

Investigator: She recalls that vividly. She said Mr. Wilson would come over and cross things out. He said that could have been one of the problems; he didn't specifically remember.

Brewster: Well, she signed up for that course in her junior year, so we did a pretty heavy sales job the second semester of the junior for courses like that. So she must have anticipated college. Why she signed for it would be an interesting thing in the junior--because that's before she ran into me. Whatever I did was not the reason she got into that course. So she realized she needed it then, early on. This was something that was coming on. I'm jumping the gun. Why are you asking me about Jan? How did she come to your attention of all the students? And she's the one that stands out so much in my mind, not in other teachers' minds. Isn't that interesting. Boy, she really sticks out--

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLENE

Investigator: Charlene, on the writing anxiety questionnaire I gave you, you indicated that you avoid writing, that you don't like to write. Why? Why isn't writing fun for you?

Charlene: It's mainly because the things that I have to write about, I can't have to say that much, or not enough for a paper, or--I don't know--I think I can talk better than I can write, and I just don't enjoy it.

Investigator: You also noted that you were uncertain about whether or not you liked to write your ideas down, whether or not you liked seeing your thoughts on paper. There seems to be contradiction there. Can you explain?

Charlene: Well, if the paper is written down and I go back and read it and it's what I like, you know, what I wanted to say, then that's all right, you know, but, then again, if it's not, I don't know, I just don't like writing it down because I've always had a teacher grade it, and the teacher most of the time didn't like what I wrote down, or she liked part of it, she didn't like the whole thing. So--

Investigator: Your mind seems to go blank when you start to work on a composition. Is that right? Why do you think you are nervous about writing? Also, can you dip into your memory and recall specific times when you blanked?

Charlene: (Nervous) Because all through high school any paper I've ever written has always been criticized by the teacher one way or the other. I don't know, I've always needed people to like what I do or to like me.

Investigator: So you think if someone doesn't like your writing, if someone criticizes your writing, that perhaps that person doesn't like you? Or perhaps that person is criticizing you? Is that your feeling?

Charlene: In a way, yes. I'm not sure what it was, but I had to take one thing and give a description of it--write a whole paper of description. I don't remember what the object was, but I had trouble then because I couldn't think of enough because it had to be one, one-and-a-half pages long, and I couldn't think of enough to write about. I couldn't even get started because I didn't know how to describe it without using the word.

Investigator: It seems from talking with you that you think about length, and when assigned a topic--"I have to attain that length." Is that what you do?

Charlene: Yes.

Investigator: "I have to have so many pages or paragraphs."

Charlene: Yes. Because that's what I was taught all through high school.

Investigator: That a paper has to be a certain length?

Charlene: Right.

Investigator: You lack confidence in your ability to express ideas. Why don't you think you're any good at writing?

Charlene: It all goes back down to, like, the teachers crticizing. They said that my points weren't clear, and it didn't say what I wanted it to say and stuff like that.

Investigator: Why isn't writing easy for you? Do you think others have an easier time writing?

Charlene: Because every time I sit down to write a paper, it takes me--for one thing I dread writing it, I wait till the last minute to do it, and once I sit down to do it it takes me forever to get it written.

Investigator: It's a long process, isn't it?

Charlene: I think other people that like writing do. Because my boyfriend, he loves to write a paper.

Investigator: He doesn't struggle the way you do?

Charlene: Yes.

Investigator: He ahs an easier time. It doesn't take him as long, you don't think?

Charlene: I don't think it takes him as long, no.

Investigator: You indicated that expressing your ideas clearly and organizing them is a problem. Would you explain?

Investigator: Well, like I said, I've always been able to talk better than I can write and so when it comes to expressing my ideas on paper, I'm not sure of the words to use. Or just like I'll be writing a paper, and I'll think of a word I can use, but I don't know how to spell it, and I don't have a dictionary there. I've always been taught that spelling is important, too. Because before, like on all my papers if we had one misspelled wrod we got a C automatically.

Investigator: When was that, Charlene?

Charlene: It was back in 10th grade. It was my first composition class.

Investigator: So if you had on spelling error, you would get a "C" automatically?

Charlene: If I'm not mistaken, that was right.

Investigator: Taking a composition course, for you, is a very frightening experience. Is that right?

Charlene: Yes.

Investigator: And handing in a composition does not make you feel good. Why? And why do you think you're going to do poorly when you turn in a composition?

Charlene: It goes back to the criticism.

Investigator: You make that assumption when you turn in a composition--"I'm going to do poorly."

Charlene: Because every time I've done it in high school, I always did poorly, and the only thing I got on my papers were C's in 10th grade.

Investigator: Would you call that your first composition course?

Charlene: The first I can remember, yes.

Investigator: And you got C's back. And that didn't feel very good.

Charlene: No, because I was always an A or B student, mostly "A", up to that point.

Investigator: How were your papers marked?

Charlene: Spelling errors and-the first couple of papers I had like run-on sentences and subject-verb agreement.

Investigator: That still troubles you.

Charlene: Yes. Like I said, if I'm not mistaken, like than a spelling error was an automatic C. Or just one little error.

Investigator: Mechanical or grammatical? And did that continue in the 11th and 12th grade?

Charlene: In the 11th grade, I didn't have to take a composition course, so I didn't take one. But in 12th grade I had to take one more composition course to graduate, so I did. The composition teacher I had for 10th grade tried to talk me into taking Composition 4 but I talked to some other teachers, and, you

know, that since I didn't have Composition 3, that I shouldn't skip over Comp 3 and go to Comp 4. So I went ahead and took Comp 3 because I had always had trouble, and I didn't want to get into a class and fail because the C's were bad enough.

Investigator: The teacher you had for Comp 3 and you also had for grammar?

Charlene: Right.

Investigator: Now explain to me--go over that again--how you felt she liked you in the grammar class.

Charlene: In the grammar class...In fact, one thing I'm sure of--I had her in composition when I was a sophomore, and I'm not sure she liked sophomores. And I was a junior when I had the grammar. So, because when I was in her composition class, she always used to criticize me and she'd see me in the hallways and I'd say "Hi" to her and she wouldn't speak. But then when I had her for grammar I had straight A's without even an effort. And then when I'd see her in the hallways, she'd say "Hi" back or ask me how I was doing, and stuff like that. By then, I'd start stopping by her room and talking to her. In fact, I used to do it about once every two weeks the last year. That was after the composition class.

Investigator: When you had that teacher for composition, you felt that she didn't like you, wasn't as friendly? You don't think it was just time and getting to know each other? You were good in grammar and she liked you. You were not good in composition class by her standards and so-

Charlene: She always liked good students. And, like I said, I wasn't good in composition. But the thing that really confused me is she said that when we came in her composition class, we shouldn't expect more than a C, that a C was a good grade.

Investigator: But that still didn't help her, her saying that?

Charlene: No.

Investigator: I know you don't like having your work evaluated. Did people in your composition class--your peers--evaluate your writing? Did you do any group-type evaluating? Or did just the teacher evaluate?

Charlene: No, just the teacher.

Investigator: You received an assignment and then turned it in and received it back?

Charlene: Yeah.

Investigator: So the teacher didn't really help you in the process of writing?

Charlene: She helped us. Like, first of all she graded our jottings and outline. I always got an "A" on my jottings and outline. But when it came to the paper, I got a C. One thing--I'm note sure if it affected her grading or not—she told the students she always got C's on her compositions and stuff like that. So I don't know if she felt that no paper was worth--in fact, we were all shocked when she gave one student an A on a paper. There was only one A in the whole class. And I was nver liked that much in school, but you know--

Investigator: So you think a student's popularity influences a teacher?

Charlene: Yeah. Because she had some popular kids in her school and--any of the teachers there, they always used to do more or talk more with the popular students. In fact, in my last composition class, I didn't think the composition teacher there liked me there either because she'd spend her time talking to the popular people. And I'd have a question about my composition and she'd say, "I'll be with you in just a minute," and she never came to me. This was when I was a senior.

Investigator: Hmm.

Charlene: Cause just like one of my friends said, they noticed that she did that, and she didn't treat me right. Because I'd ask her a question, and she'd just totally ignore me. In fact, I was standing in front of her one day and she was just sitting here and I know she heard me because she looked up at me, and she just ignored me. So--

Investigator: You were not on her list? Okay, I know that you don't like getting your writing evaluated, and now I'm getting a picture of why. Do you fear your writing being evaluated? You indicated that you don't even like your friends to read your writing. Is that so?

Charlene: Yes. My writing--I don't know--I usually don't like what I write on a paper because it doesn't really say what I want it to say most of the time. So I guess that's why I don't want other people to read it.

Investigator: How did you feel when you first started writing to your boyfriend?

Charlene: Like I said, he's real good in English and all, so I took my paper and was scared to send him a letter because I said he'll sit down and go through it and find every error, you know, and then say something to me about it when he got back, but he didn't do that. And I found that he was writing less formally. In the composition class, if we used an illiterate word, we'd get a C on our paper. And he wrote back and used that and just other little things and I just got more comfortable as I went on writing him.

Investigator: Did you do much writing in high school? How much? What kind?

Charlene: I had to do reports every now and then. But not that often. It was in the earlier grades that I had to do it more. Like 6th, 7th grades.

Investigator: Let's go back to high school. It's really amazing that you can go all the way back and list most of your teachers, from first grade on. What do you remember writing from eary years?

Charlene: I used to write papers in 6th grade. She had these little pictures and she wanted us to take it and, like, it was mainly creative writing. I enjoyed that. Because we'd take the pictures and write up a little store of what we, you know, wanted to write. She always liked my papers then, so I guess that's why I liked writing--because the teacher liked them.

Investigator: So you associated writing with fun.

Charlene: Yeah. It was extra credit. It wasn't for a grade. That was. So I used to enjoy doing that. I used to do as much as I could, so...

Investigator: Do you have any other pleasant memories of writing?

Charlene: Not that I can remember. Because other than that teacher, they always used to criticize my writing.

Investigator: What other kinds of writing did you do? Let's say in 7th, 8th...

Charlene: They were like reports and certain kinds of aspects, certain things.

Investigator: Geography, history?

Charlene: Yeah.

Investigator: And did you feel okay about that kind of writing or just...

Charlene: I did it because it had to be done. After 6th grade, my teachers starting criticizing me again, so I didn't like writing that much.

Investigator: Can you dip back earlier than 6th grade?

Charlene: I can't remember any of the writings I did before 6th grade.

Investigator: And you say that you have most of your writing?

Charlene: Boxes. It would be interesting, it really would.

Investigator: What were your feelings going into the WSPT?

Charlene: Well, from the moment I got that thing they said I had to take a test, I dreaded it. Plus, I said I can't do any research. They're going to tell me a subject I don't know anything about, and I'm going to be stuck. Well, I was scared from the moment I got the thing until the moment I got through with the test.

Investigator: What happened when you looked at the topics?

Charlene: I looked at the topics and I said, "I don't know anything about either topic." I never really thought about if we should have more educational televison shows, and then the other I really don't know that much about whether newspaper editors should indulge a source. I really didn't know that much about that, so I had to think about the television and try to write enough about that. I though about it and got my opinion, but then I couldn't find enough stuff to write because it said it had to be 400 to 500 words or something like that. And I just couldn't think of enough stuff to write.

Investigator: How did you feel when you left that test?

Charlene: I felt like I did...like I was on the borderline, that I didn't know. Which I really didn't care after I got out of there. I just knew it was over with. I said it's over with. I can't do nothing about it now. I'm either going to make it or not-so-but I think it was still there because I ended up getting sicker as the day went along.

Investigator: Thinking about writing can sometimes make you sick?

Charlene: Right.

Investigator: How did you feel when you found out you were placed in Basic Writing?

Charlene: Well, I didn't feel so bad because everybody around me was making it--getting in this class. One of my friends came up and said he got into 110. He said he was on the borderline, but he made it. But that bugged me because, I thought, when he was in high school he was in a lower composition class than I was. So I said, how did he make it and I didn't make it? So, it was just that one person didn't.

Investigator: It seems you've had a slight attitude change toward writing lately. How do you account for that? You're doing a lot of letter writing now, aren't you?

Charlene: Well, this class--you haven't told us to write on anything--you haven't told us that we have to have a certain length—and then the subjects, because, just like you didn't say it was to be exactly on this or exactly on that, it had to be our reactions and I can usually write pretty good on that. So...

Investigator: Perhaps writing to your boyfriend helped too?

Charlene: Yeah.

Investigator: Anything else you want to share?

Charlene: I was just thinking again like I was back in the 10th grade, like I was saying a misspelled word, used on the paper and I was thinking another thing--I'm more sure of this than anything else-that if we used "you" or your second person on paper, I'm pretty sure that was an automatic C.

Investigator: Any kind of paper?

Charlene: Yeah. It was almost impossible to get an A or B in her class. Like I said, from the first day we walked in there, she said we shouldn't expect more than a C. But it just got to me because--one thing, I've always been an A or B student, I made the honor rolls, and I was in the National Honor Society, Junior National Honor Society—and I even made Who's Who Among American High School Students.

Investigator: Wonderful.

Charlene: And my brother, I've always had, my brother works in the Pentagon now, he went to the high school and he was, like, 9 out of 250, but when I graduated, I was 23 out of 535 students.

Investigator: That's up there.

Charlene: I always had to prove myself because when I was in junior high, my brother said you'll never make--he said if you can make the National Honor Society, because you can get in that..and you know because he said that's a lot easier, but it's harder to get in the National Honor Society in high school. I set two goals because I had, since about the 6th grade, I hadn't made straight A's, I made A's and B's. And I said to myself, my two goals were I was going to make straight A's at least one 9 weeks, and I was going to make the National Honor Society. Well, you can't join the NHS or apply to join it during your first year. So as soon as I could apply, I went and applied for it, and I was accept.

Investigator: That's wonderful.

Charlene: So I got that goal. The sponsor, she really liked me because I had her for a teacher, too. And she always said I was one of the best members and all. Because I loved it. It was good for my ego. But I never accomplished my goal of straight A's. I came close one year, my eleventh grade, I made, the first 3 weeks I make 5 A's and 1 B. So that was the closest I ever came. That was the year I didn't take a unit of composition.

Investigator: In what school subjects were you the strongest?

Charlene: Math. I'm going to major in business. Just like all through high school and all through, you know, most of 11th grade, I made straight A's in math. And when it came to pre-calculus, I made A's and B's. That's one of my favorite subjects.

Investigator: Yes, I can tell. You're lighting up. (Laughter) Thanks for your time.

INTERVIEW WITH MS. PADGETT

Investigator: You said Charlene had come back a couple of times.

Padgett: I think she's been back twice this year. I believe I worked with her as a sophomore.

Investigator: Right, you had her in a nine-week course--Organizing the Essay. Then you had her as a junior for grammar. She got an A in the grammar class and in Organizing she got a B.

Padgett: Probably a B because she's the kind of student that worries you to death as far as making the corrections and then understanding why she had made a correction, and I didn't see that much improvement--in that organizing class. The grammar class as it is structured here--rote memory can get any child an A. Charlene wants to work. Do you know anything about her family?

Investigator: A little bit. Her brothers.

Padgett: All of them have been good students, pluggers. She's highly motivated. I sometimes wonder, though, if Charlene doesn't feel that Charlene should get better grades than Charlene gets. I could not get her to understand that just because she was correctiong the theme over and over that she should end up with an above average grade. I couldn't get her to understand that she wa a C student.

Investigator: She earned a B by persistence?

Padgett: Did she have any other composition classes?

Investigator: Not really. Let's talk more about Organizing. Here is what she said about that class. She was devastated by the negative comments in that class because she felt the negative criticism--you know, the red marks, the corrections--were comments against her personally. She felt that you didn't like her in composition, but you liked her when you had her for grammar. You follow me?

Padgett: (laughs) Now I can see how she arrived at that. Because right in the middle of class I said I don't approve of sophomores, juniors, and seniors being

together in a class in high school because this brings every one of my classes down to the sophomore level. And I'm constantly having to stop myself and say, "All right, my darling sophomores, we must learn this."

Investigator: Semester courses 10 through 12 can be mixed?

Padgett: If a child is 10th-grade level beginning his writing, he needs to work on his skills. I would give the papers back with all of these notes, all of these corrections, and she would get angry with me. I would just tell her, "All right, you little smartass, you just sit down and we'll get this thing after school. Before school, we do not have time for this thing." She was very justified. But I could not get her to listen. She had made up her mind as far as her writing was concerned; I really wasn't trying to change her style. It was a formal writing experience. I was merely trying to help her see such picky things like we do not begin every sentence in a paragraph with the same structure. We must vary the structure.

Investigator: She said one spelling error, you automatically get a C.

Padgett: If it were...this is the kind of spelling error: I'd give them the list--I still do the same thing--I give them a list at the beginning. If you get the three to's (two, too) mixed up, if you get the two there's (their) mixed (what I call my illiterates), if you make a grammatical error such as subject--verb agreement, if you make a grammatical error using a pronoun that absolutely has not antecedent--these bring your paper down to an average paper. There can be other errors, that won't do it. She remembers "automatic C" because of one spelling error. And her background, again, does show through.

Investigator: Her parents aren't educated beyond 8th grade, you mean? She said, "Every time I turned in a paper in high school I always did poorly...I was always an A or B student, up to that point." Then she goes on, "If I'm not mistaken, a spelling error was an automatic C. Just one little error," (see this is how she's hearing it) "mechanical or grammatical. We did that continually in 11th or 12th grade." Well, she says in the 11th grade she didn't have to take a composition course, so she didn't take one. And that's interesting. But in 12th grade she had to have one more course to graduate--one more composition course. "My composition teacher, the one I had

in 10th grade, tried to talk me into taking Comp 4 but I talked to some other teachers, and since I didn't have Comp 3, then I thought I would have trouble. The C's in Organizing were bad enough."

Padgett: I was trying to help her into 4. Because I never taught 3. There's not that much difference. And she would have more of a variety of writing experiences.

Investigator: She only has that 9 week Organizing class, and then beyond that she has this Comp 3 as a senior, and it was mainly writing a research paper; so she has very little writing background.

Padgett: That was my reason for trying to talk her into Comp 4. She couldn't take Comp 2. They wouldn't give her credit for it. She got caught with the system telling her that she had to have a grammar course, a writing course, and a literature course. She was told she could not take--because organizing was basically the same as Comp 2--she could not take Comp 2. She had a choice of 3 or 4.

Investigator: At the end of the interview, she talked about her goals and about one of her brothers. And then she said she had a goal—here, let's see. "When I went to high school, I set two goals. My two goals were, I was going to make straight A's at least one nine weeks and I was going to make the National Honor Society." And so in her junior year she just ducked composition here and she came close to achieving her goals, but she didn't quite make it. She never accomplished straight A's. She had 5 A's and 1 B--the closest she ever came--and that was the year she didn't take composition. And so that's interesting there.

Padgett: I bet I can explain her C here. This disturbed her. She used to cry on my shoulder about this.

Investigator: The "C" with Mr. Newton?

Padgett: But she's a person who refuses to regurgitate back. And here you have to do it to get an A. I tried to explain it to her.

Investigator: Mr. Newton told me that a lot of his students go onto the University of Virginia and get A's in World Lit. and other literature classes and are grateful for the background.

Padgett: They are doing that not because of the system--they are doing that despite the system. They are doing that because usually--you check the background--they come from a home environment that has given them something that when they come into our classes, if we mention or give the least little spark, they pick it up and carry it on.

Investigator: Charlene would have a handicap, you're saying? So what happened in 10th grade composition; this was a devastating experience for her, I mean, personally. She did not have a strong enough self-concept to take that, or know how to use it where someone else--because I know your reputation--I know a lot of students come back and thank you either directly or however--the word gets around that you have really helped them a great deal with their writing. Then you see someone like Charlene who could not work with negative comments; she did not know how to interpret them or understand what was going on. She thought, "That person does not like me when I write." That's how she handled it. Do you see what I's saying? It's the way different students react. And partially what you're saying is something about the home background. I'm looking myself at Charlene reacting to what you did, and others, I'm sure, reacting quite differently.

Padgett: It could be due to the fact that I do not understand Charlene. Or Charlene's kind I know nothing about a world that is not exposed to educating.

Investigator: We're talking about different teachers' cultural backgrounds, too.

Padgett: That's the major difference here. And the emphasis that is given and how a child is penalized from me. I still think with Charlene that some people can react to negative criticism and others cannot react and usually it has to do with self-image.

Investigator: And she also was not a popular person.

Padgett: Right. A dull person. An uninteresting, dull person. Which is sad. Now, out of the same environment her brother reacted entirely different.

Investigator: She said in her Organizing class she would get A's on her jottings and outlines. You did look at process--you didn't just have them turn in compositions and put the red marks on and turn them back. Then she'd get C's on the papers, which depressed her.

Padgett: And that's how she possibly ultimately pushed through with B's. I tried to make her see that the process does make a difference in life. I'm still trying today with the writing process, or with anything in learning, that while the process is important, it's the end product that's going to make the difference. But once again, I think we need more interaction among ourselves, as far as our students are concerned.

Investigator: Charlene should have had a better composition background. She should have been advised differently--even though you made the suggestion, you know, that she take Comp 4, she leaned toward what another teacher said.

Padgett: You are just saying what I have been preaching, that we are not doing what we should do. I just left a one-level class--practical writing--students are sitting there that have already passed with A or B in Comp 1 which is a two-level class--and that should not be allowed.

Investigator: Is there a difference in grades according to teachers? Is that what you're saying?

Padgett: Yes.

Investigator: That's why when they come to ODU, we have to judge their writing according to their performance on the WSPT--we cannot take their high school records. Parents used to come in and say, "Look, my daughter has all these A's in these English courses and you placed her in Basic Writing." I imagine that Charlene would ask questions a lot?

Padgett: Yes, I would reach a point, and I'd say "Now Charlene, there are so many people in here." Now that could be misinterpreted--"She doesn't want to help me." Charlene is a demanding question-asking child. Probably in order to get rid of her in elementary school, they gave her grades she didn't earn. The principal of the junior high school tells English teachers to give A's and B's and C's. A friend of mine who teaches English in junior high gives B's to keep her job. Now a semester of grammar must be taught--in isolation. City-wide requirement.

Investigator: Look at Charlene's case--straight A's in the two grammar classes and she would say, "When I would write--"

Padgett: A person who has the kind of mind that can memorize this--all we have to do is write sentences.

Investigator: And here we have Charlene with A's in grammar and she has all these grammatical problems on her WSPT.

APPENDIX C. Examples of Consultants' Responses

JAN'S CASE Consultant 1

I. General Response

These tapes convince me of one thing concerning writing anxiety: it results from a complex array of reasons, often determined by a combination of extremes rather than moderate variety in teaching methods. Students subconsciously sense that writing is more than simplistic maxims based on either style or usage, yet they have no central concept defining writing as a way of learning and knowing to help them as they tackle a writing task. They sense that writing, whether personal or adacemic, should have a purpose, but they hold the reductive notion that the "prupose" in many writing classes is to please the "teacher-as-audience." Even the well-liked teacher is apt to be a culprit here. All the reasons behind writing anxiety, in other words, are subsumed under the question, "What is Writing?"

II. Specific Observations

1. Both these teachers seem to have no clear understanding of what they are teaching when they teach writing. They perceive it as a collection of discrete parts, not as a holistic process, a way of knowing and communicating, with different, but clearly defined, goals. This lack of understanding on their part has had obviously negative effects on Jan's attitude toward herself as a writer. She never does have a clear sense of what she is not doing; she has instead a rather fragmented perception of the flaws (wordiness, for example) in her writing. This observation leads me to suggest that writing teachers often negatively affect student attitudes not solely because they fail to relate them affectively but because they simply do not know their subject. This ignorance results in reliance on fragmented criticism of the student's written products rather than a sensible and well-rounded attention to a range of composing behaviors-emotional, logical and technical.

2. Jan is obviously what Kellogg Hunt would call a "fluent" writer, although I have no quantitative measures of her T-units. But then, probably early in secondary school, "flowery" language met head-on with the adult and sober expectations of teachers who represented academic discourse--term papers and the like. These teachers emphasized the classical virtues of style: correctness, clarity, appropriateness, dignity. Perhaps the clash of these opposing pedagogical forces, one fostering what Moffett would call "growing rank before being thinned," the other thinning at the expense or richness of any kind, resulted in Jan's block.

3. Jan seems more mature in her reactions to criticism now (in college) than she seems to have been in these two teacher's classes. Is that simply because she is older and in a more sophisticated environment? Or is it that she is getting a more complete picture of the complex goals, purposes, and forms of writing?

4. My final observation concerns a generalization about writing that seems to hold the key to Jan's and many college student's problems with writing. Teachers of writing do not separate writing as an expressive activity from writing as a way of communicating. In a sense, Emig says similar things when she draws implications about reflexive and extensive writing in the composing processes of twelfth-graders. This separation, Jan's case suggests, is an extremely important one in later elementary school, middle school, and high school, and--in its more sophisticated forms--it is also a problem in teaching college writing. A clear-minded separation of these two aims of writing would have enabled well-meaning and conscientious teachers such as Wilson and Brewster to provide a curriculum for students such as Jan that would have offered the encouragement or reflexive writing and the critical discipline of extensive writing, in a positive atmosphere. One would grow out of the other within the student's composing process.

JAN'S CASE Consultant 2

Being in the "average" track influences everything--average ability, average incentive, program weak developmentally.

p. 1 Describes work as average. This is her own judgement. Does it apply to all types of writing. Restated on p. 5.

p. 2 Barrier. Unanalyzed experiences are hazy, only a collection of experiences. Analysis produces something different. She does not understand that all writers have this problem sometimes until you suggest it. Or she perceives her problem as greater than others. She cannot produce a paper quickly.

p. 3 Like Charlene, she can write with enjoyment and a sense of success to persons close to her.

p. 4 Identifies problem as unnecessary words and a lack of organization. Later her teacher agrees. The power of the teacher is seen in the red marks. Jan reacts by feeling that she cannot do anything right. She does not seem to know how to improve her paper as a result of the marks. Did the teacher make helpful comments?

p. 5 Jan learned more from the discussion with her peers than she did from red marks. Classification and definition helped her. That's the ground floor of idea development. May students rarely get beyond that level. Knows value of writing to get better grades.

p. 6 Never had a trusting relationship in an English class. Very significant. "Frankness" gave Jan a complex. It seems easier for this teacher to criticize than to provide constructive suggestions.

p. 7 Jan states that a positive attitude is necessary for learning, even for getting to class. A hint concerning high absenteeism for some classes. The experience with Mr. Wilson turned out well in the end. Some degree of depression is not harmful. Does Jan have a lazy streak? How much prodding does she require?

p. 8 Claims she knew the fundamentals of writing by grade 6. "I mean not of writing but to do writing." A very significant comment. She thinks you can learn how to write through skills activities-spelling, sentence patterns. Like Charlene, she found the sixth grade writing experiences positive and enjoyable. Dramatics teachers may know more about the learning process than most English teachers.

p. 9 Note Jan's approval of Ms. Brewster's rationale for writing several essays prior to writing the research paper. Or is Jan putting words into the teacher's mouth? Many teachers of research units decide to teach paragraph development before launching into the major paper. They do not see how to teach writing as students progress. Then they think they can say, "Write a research paper remembering what you have learned."

p. 10 Mr. Wilson rewrites students' sentences. This is editig. Some can learn through this technique, but who would change the teacher's sentence? It is easier to take it all even if a later revision suggests it is no longer appropriate. A little teacher ego to support here. "I don't really write you know what I like to write."

p. 11 A "hopeless case." Strong language for this situation. Reveals how deep the complex was. Mr. Wilson has some good qualities, but he may not have a comprehensive understanding of the composing process.

p. 12 "didn't really beat my brains just trying to get a good paper down" An average commitment; average expectations. I am puzzled about Jan's conviction that she learned all her grammar by grade 6. Maybe because she sees her problems as wordiness and a lack of organization. Home background may have lessened problems in this area.

Perfecting each sentence at the beginning. A starter device. She was probably planning without fully realizing it.

p. 14 WSPT. Entered with confidence but simply wrote. "that whole happy year was--" Note that she had a happy year, thinking that she had a guarantee of success.

CHARLENE'S CASE Consultant 3

I have several impressions from the transcripts about Charlene, but what strikes me is the stronger impressions I have about her teachers. In some ways, (and this is responding in an intuitive and quick way) I feel as though Charlene was a victim to some extent of the scheduling and course structure confusion which seems to characterize her progression through her high school composition class. I end up not feeling very good about the lack of attention that was given to her placement in the courses and the lack of congruence in teacher expectation and actual performance.

At the same time, it is very clear that Charlene went into these courses with a poor writing self concept as well as a personal lack of confidence in herself as a person. She seems outer-directed in many ways; she equates teachers favoritism with only the popular kids, and takes it personally when a teacher offers suggestions for improvement. She sees the teachers' evaluation of her writing as equivalent to their perceptions of her as a person.

She obviously has had to compete against (at least in her own assessment) against the positive perceptions that others have of her brothers. She seems to have set their accomplishments and personalities as measure for her own achievements, and, unfortunately, does not seem to measure up, at least according to these teachers' evaluations. Ms. Mahoney and Mr. Newton could hardly remember her. Ms. Padgett admitted a lack of feeling or understanding toward Charlene, and characterized her as dull and uninteresting. She seemed impatient that Charlene could not discern between the developmental processes of composition and the mechanical aspects of mastering grammar structures. She characterized Charlene as possessing few critical thinking skills. Ms. Thompson remembers Charlene as not being very popular; however, she did try hard and asked a lot of questions in Ms. THompson's

class. However, Charlene still seemed locked into her rather narrow conception of the writing process--that is, follow steps one, two and three and the writing will emerge in a proper manner. My sense is that she received very little encouragement or individual attention from any of those teachers, and this seemed to solidify her weak self-concept as a writer.

Charlene, however, does seem to respond to positive support and encouragement. Her boyfriend's attention to writing as well as attention in the BW class seem at least to be the beginnings of a movement beyond perceiving evaluation as negative and critical and thus detrimental to her conception of herself as a person. There seems to be a critical link between self-concept and perceptions of self as successful student (and therefore person) for Charlene. I guess I read through the transcripts a second time looking for some hopeful signs for her and I found them in her apparent response to attention and support. (She's much like the rest of the human race, yes?)

The implications of this case study for me rest strongly in teacher attitude, approach, and conceptualization of the writing process.